

Problematizing eurocentric sustainability within the context of business management and exploring the pluriversality of sustainability

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Business is held responsible for much of the world's unsustainability and despite over 50 years of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (CSR) discourse and practice, the state of sustainability continues to deteriorate. This is because businesses within a capitalistic system tend to approach sustainability the same way they do business, bastioned by ideals of profit maximization and the commodification of nature. Additionally, sustainability discourse and practice are largely based on Western values, judgment, and epistemology, which determines the construction, framing, and understanding of sustainability problems and responses. This study refers to this as eurocentric sustainability whereby the mindset that created the problem, is the same mindset used to solve it.

As such, there is an imperative to understand and pursue sustainability in pluralistic ways, which includes not only the perspectives of people who have traditionally been excluded from the discourse (plurality) but also approaches to knowledge and meaning beyond the limited parameters of Western epistemology and hermeneutics (pluriversality). Thus, the central aims of this dissertation are to problematize eurocentric sustainability and explore the pluriversality of sustainability through three separate but interconnected studies.

The first study is a systematic literature review of eurocentrism and Just Sustainabilities (JS) within business management and the implications for sustainability and corporate social responsibility, by understanding what characterizations of eurocentrism and Just Sustainabilities are presented in business management literature. The findings suggest four key features of eurocentrism - the *superiority* of Western people, countries, ideas, knowledge, and values, which are expressed through the *domination* and *oppression* of people and nature, *universalism*, particularly of knowledge and culture, and *modernity*. These characteristics are also reflected in the broader eurocentrism scholarship and serve as the lens for this dissertation. JS is one approach for conducting plurality research that centers on sustainability injustices, largely created by the consequences of eurocentrism. The study illuminates the importance of problematizing eurocentrism within the sustainability discourse which continues to promote the superiority and universality of Western knowledge and epistemology that serves to exacerbate sustainability issues and maintain inequities.

Next through an empirical inquiry using semi-structured interviews, the second study examines how the climate and sustainability discourses are perceived by owner-managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and what influence spirituality has on these understandings. Eight

discourses emerged, each illuminating a distinct way of thinking and speaking about climate and sustainability. The four discourses of *interdependency*, *social*, *longevity*, and *responsibility* present a collectivist framing. Whereas the four discourses of *superiority*, *power*, *paradoxical*, and *pessimism* speak to perceptions of and reactions to eurocentric sustainability, which may be the cause of inaction by some participants. However, this inaction should not be mistaken as a lack of motivation, knowledge, or resources as it is more likely to do with not wanting to engage in eurocentric sustainability given the maladaptive outcomes it produces and/or their high costs. Further, many spoke of sustainability through ideas of totality, interdependency, equilibrium, and harmony; and that nature is intertwined with spirituality, which is also conveyed through themes of interdependency and equilibrium, revealing common threads between sustainability and spirituality. A key contribution of the second study is that it empirically demonstrates sustainability means different things to different people and also suggests that sustainability leaders and experts avoid viewing themselves as the only knowledge holders.

The third study examines what motivates, supports, and limits participants in pursuing climate and environmental action using thematic analysis of the same dataset. The findings demonstrate that most respondents show deep concern for sustainability issues and see their role as minimizing environmental harm; often grounded by a culture of ‘no waste’. Outwardly, the biggest enablers and barriers are related to financial considerations. However, a deeper examination reveals that the inauthenticity of sustainability and CSR practices also creates cynicism and distrust, shaping attitudes and engagement in environmental action. This is a noteworthy finding as extant studies show the engagement of SMEs in environmental action is largely influenced by owner-managers’ values.

This dissertation makes several scholarly, empirical, and practical contributions to sustainability management scholarship, including novel associations as a result of integrating data points from eurocentrism, business management, SME, spirituality, and collectivism-individualism scholarship to create or strengthen relationships among these discourses through a problem-focused approach. As pluriversality studies are relatively nascent in most academic domains, this research also serves to trailblaze a path for empirical pluriversality studies examining sustainability in business management.

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Dedication

To Mother Earth/Nature

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

This dissertation problematizes what I term as *eurocentric sustainability* and explores sustainability through a pluriversality approach by understanding 1) what characterizations of eurocentrism and Just Sustainabilities are presented in business management literature; 2) how the sustainability discourse, which includes climate change, are perceived by diverse SME owner-managers; and 3) what motivates, enables, and constrains owner-managers in pursuing environmental action.

I begin with a literature review and research context in Section 1.2 to explain what is meant by eurocentric sustainability starting from the ‘enlightenment’ period; how this connects to present-day understandings of sustainability, sustainable development, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), and why there is a need for pluralistic approaches to sustainability. This chronicling serves to highlight the research gaps and thus, the purpose and contribution of my research, which is summarized in Section 1.3. The remainder of the chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological perspective and theoretical lens (Section 1.4), methods (Section 1.5), ethical considerations (Section 1.6), and my positionality and reflexivity statements (Sections 1.7 and 1.8). Section 1.9 concludes with how the rest of the thesis is organized (Chapters 2 to 5).

1.2 Literature Review & Research Context

After being in a relatively balanced state for over 11,000 years, planet Earth is moving out of the Holocene epoch due to human-induced global warming and environmental degradation, creating and exacerbating a myriad of environmental and socioeconomic challenges and thus, making climate change one of the most pressing sustainability issues the world is currently facing (Steffen et al., 2015; Hsiang et al., 2018). Environmental exploitation accelerated with the unearthing of fossil fuels that birthed the first industrial revolution 300 years ago and is the leading cause of anthropogenic climate change (de Vries, 2013). However, environmental degradation has long been underpinned by societal attitudes in Western civilizations where humans regard themselves as separate from, and superior to nature in which they have dominion over Earth, a doctrine that is reflective of the Judeo-Christian tradition (Norde, 1997). This was (and still is) guided by a belief that nature is only valuable if it provides something of value, a mindset that does not view nature as having inherent value

(Leopold, 1949; Castro, 2004). As a result, unused and unconsumed resources are viewed as wasteful, which has led to many unsustainable undertakings, causing resource degradation and depletion (Feygina, 2013). Thus, began the search for newer lands, and the domination and oppression of nature and people, which Matteo Ricci, an Italian missionary who visited China over 400 years ago, reflected on in his personal diary:

It seems worthwhile to record a few more ways in which the Chinese differ from the Europeans. It is remarkable when we stop to consider that in a kingdom of almost limitless expanse and innumerable population, abounding in resources of every kind, although they have a well-equipped army and navy that could easily conquer neighbouring nations, neither the emperor nor his people ever thinking of waging wars of aggression. They are quite content with what they have, and have no ambitions of conquests. In this respect they seem to be very different from Europeans who frequently disturb their neighbors and are covetous of what others enjoy. While the nations of the west seems to be entirely consumed with the idea of supreme domination, they cannot even preserve what their ancestors have bequeathed them, as the Chinese have done for thousands of years (Matteo Ricci, 1580 as cited in Wood, 2020, p. 293).

1.2.1 Collectivism-Individualism

While Ricci's assessment of China may be perceived as romanticized and controversial in contemporary times, at its core the passage speaks to mindsets. Mindsets are attitudes and beliefs that inform motivations, behaviors, and how one makes sense of the world (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Most broadly, collectivism-individualism is a study of cultural mindsets (Arieli & Sagiv, 2018). Individualism is a societal pattern where individuals view themselves as independent of the collective, embracing ideals such as competitiveness, uniqueness, self-reliance, being the best, and independence; traits more pronounced in the West (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Ogihara & Uchida, 2014). Collectivism speaks to a societal archetype characterized by qualities such as interdependency, harmony, cooperation, and duty; features that are common in many non-Western cultures (Cho et al., 2013; Ogihara & Uchida, 2014; Hwang, 2020). For example, in their book *Clash*, Markus and Conner (2014) present studies from around the world that show how collectivism and interdependence manifest in many non-Western cultures whether in Latin America, Africa, or Asia.

While these are generalizations that do not wholly or accurately portray any one culture or country, the scholarship offers insightful glimpses into the dominant characteristics of collectivism and individualism (Xiang et al., 2019; Hwang, 2020; Pelham et al., 2022). In this study, the collectivism-

individualism scholarship serves to offer insights into dominant traits that have and continue to influence and shape sustainability discourse and practice. Another important reason for drawing from this scholarship is that European colonialism is entrenched in individualism (Waswo, 1996; Kwarteng, 2011), as are Western ideas of modernity and progress (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1997), which serve as antecedents to today's concept of sustainable development (Du Pisani, 2006), as the following sections will elucidate.

1.2.2 Progress, Modernity & Colonialism

While the idea of progress dates back to antiquity, present-day understandings of Western progress are rooted in Christianity, which reached its pinnacle during the enlightenment era and the industrial revolutions that followed (Du Pisani, 2006; Holland, 2020). Christian theology was (and still is) crucial in informing how progress was thought of in the West and became the “conceptual and cosmological frame of knowledge-making” which was reinforced through institutions such as churches, monasteries, and universities (Mignolo, 2009, p. 176). This period is called the enlightenment because the various thinkers of the time (e.g., Voltaire, Diderot, Locke, Hume, Bacon) took the ancient Greek understanding of knowledge as the path to “self-enlightenment and spiritual fulfillment” (i.e., self-power) and transmuted it to ‘knowledge is power’, which insists that not only is knowledge absolute but that knowledge should be used to “control and use nature to our advantage”, ideas which are core to contemporary Western notions of progress (Skolimowski, 1974, p. 54).

The secularization of the 18th century replaced Christian theology with science and technology and it was during this time that progress, modernity, and science fused, as did the illusion that science enables “mastery over nature” (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 84). This mindset led not only to nature being viewed as a commodity to produce consumer goods but human progress became entangled with economic growth and thus, the rapacious appetite for “cheap labor and nature” grew (Hickel, 2021). The industrial revolutions along with capitalism, science, and technology increased production capacity in several Western countries further bolstering not only the idea of modernity but slavery and colonial expansion (de Vries, 2013; Frankopan, 2017; Ward, 2017). The wealth and power extracted and amassed from these exploits were unequally distributed, creating devastating and long-term environmental and socioeconomic injustices that continue to endure and contribute to today's sustainability problems (Du Pisani, 2006; de Vries, 2013; Frankopan, 2017; Pal, 2018; Hickel, 2021).

The enlightenment period not only “irrevocably transform[ed] human societies” into mass consumers but associated progress with economic growth, leading people to believe that it is “necessary and acceptable to ravage the landscape in the pursuit of maximum economic production and that only things produced by industry and placed on the market for sale have value”; a mindset that not only is still relevant today but reverberates throughout the world, and underpins much of our unsustainability (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 84). In turn, many scholars such as Leal Filho et al. (2022, p. 3) contend that our “ecological crises [were] triggered by western society and amplified by the Judeo-Christian faith.”

To be clear, Europeans were not the only enslavers and colonizers, as violence, prejudice, and discrimination, transcend space, time, and race; however, the devastating and long-term impacts of Europe’s *mercantile* colonization are not only different but they are hegemonic and continue to persist (Skolimowski, 1974; Pal, 2018; M. Taylor, 2020). Eurocentric narratives, which are dominant, paint a picture that the West’s wealth and advancement are self-generated, a manifestation of individualism, disregarding that its historical and current prosperity are enmeshed in the exploitation of much of the non-West (Shohat & Stam, 2009). These views are dominant as they are established and spread through various forms of power such as economic (e.g., nation-states and corporations), institutional (e.g., IMF, WTO, World Bank), and discursive (e.g., negative descriptors of the non-West such as ‘inferior’) (Banerjee, 2008).

For the West to preserve its living standards and world hegemony, current and past leaders have long known that disparities must exist, which was (and still is) done through the preservation and promotion of capitalism and colonialism (Puchala, 2005). Prior to World War II, leaders such as Winston Churchill (1933 as cited in Mukerjee, 2010, p. 1) were often unabashed about this “In my view England is now beginning a new period of struggle and fighting for its life, and the crux of it will be not only the retention of India but a much stronger assertion of commercial rights.” Impressed with the ‘successes’ of Western Europe, in particular England, Adolf Hitler similarly sought to grow the German empire through colonial expansion and emulate what he observed as:

...a wonderful marriage of economic conquest with political domination...instead of expanding in space, instead of exporting men, they [the English] have exported goods and have built up an economic world-system. ... [This state of affairs could persist only] so long as the difference in the standard of living in different parts of the world continues to exist. (Adolf Hitler, 1932 in My New Order p. 104 as cited in Mukerjee, 2010, p. 33-34)

The end of World War II triggered the end of *formal* colonization, not because the ‘allies’ (now known as the United Nations) recognized that their colonization was eerily similar to the atrocities of the holocaust but because it was no longer financially or militarily feasible (Mukerjee, 2010; Housley, 2023). The British for example, were known for not only coloring their imperial projects with noble intent but took a “sanctimonious” position to justify and defend its self-interests (i.e., individualism) (Mukerjee, 2010; Housley, 2023); a practice the West continues to date.

Despite the end of formal colonization, the West still needs access to “cheap labor and nature” to maintain its wealth and power (Hickel, 2021) and thus, colonization shifted to economic development, which is “almost synonymous” with economic growth (Purvis et al., 2019, p. 683). Development continues to be sold as the answer to reducing the devastating inequities and poverty, much of which was created by colonialism but eurocentric narratives paint a picture that this poverty was self-inflicted due to the inherent inferiority of the non-West (Shohat & Stam, 2009; Young, 2020). As such, development continues to be presented as a path toward progress and modernity (which are also “almost synonymous” with one another), leading to binaries such as developed/developing countries, as well as modernization theory (Du Pisani, 2006).

Modernization theory claims that ‘developing’ or ‘third world’ countries are incapable of developing and modernizing on their own due to their innate inferiority and as such, require imperial intervention (Mignolo, 2011b). This exacerbated negative and inaccurate portrayals of the ‘developing’ world as charity, incapable of helping themselves, in need of saving, and speaking on behalf of, ostensibly by the West, without acknowledging the significant role of colonialism in creating these systemic issues and inequalities (Jackson, 2005; Brodie, 2007; Shohat & Stam, 2009; Young, 2020). Modernization theory advocates that ‘developing’ countries need to emulate the Western liberal model of development and progress, namely through ‘free’ market competition (i.e., capitalism) (Komlosy, 2021). This involves adopting “mental models of the West (rationalization), the institutions of the West (the market), the goals of the West (high mass consumption), and the culture of the West (worship of the commodity)” (Peet, 1999, p. 85-86).

Though supporters of modernization theory have diminished over time, its conceptual underpinnings continue to be prevalent (Straubhaar, 2015), particularly under the pretenses of globalization, sustainable development, and neoliberalism (Banerjee, 2003; Shohat & Stam, 2009; Young, 2020). The development and modernization of ‘developing’ countries were and still are largely out of

Western self-interest (i.e., individualism) that continues to seek access to “cheap labor and nature” (Hickel, 2021; Komlosy, 2021). Escobar (1995, p. 6) explains this is “why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped in the early post-World War II period, how ‘to develop’ became a fundamental problem for them.”

By the 1970s, it was difficult to ignore the ensuing social and ecological crises in the name of progress and economic development, which continues to justify “the reign of the free market, for colonial exploitation of non-Western societies, and for ravaging the biosphere” (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 89). Thus, notions of progress, growth, and development started being critically challenged, which led to the coining of sustainable development (discussed in Section 1.2.3) (Du Pisani, 2006).

Moreover, the “Racist discourses [that were] leveraged to cheapen the lives of others for the sake of growth [during colonial times...] are used today to justify wages in the Global South that remain below the level of subsistence” (Hickel, 2021, p. 2). In other words, inequities must exist for the rich, who are mostly in the West, to continue enjoying their high standard of living (Shohat & Stam, 2009; Young, 2020). This may also help to explain why many businesses in the West have offshored their manufacturing to non-Western countries where the labor and resource costs are cheaper, and environmental and human rights laws are less stringent (Komlosy, 2021).

Many of the unsustainable practices during formal colonial rule such as the exploitation of resources and people, continue today by businesses under capitalism (referred to as business from hereon in), illustrating how and why Western (neo)colonialism endures (Maak, 2009, Pal, 2018; Hemais et al., 2021). In fact, during formal colonial rule, private companies were key actors in exploiting people and nature for the sole purpose of profits (Dalrymple, 2019). As such, business is held responsible for many of the world’s sustainability problems (Porter & Kramer, 2011), which eventually led to the establishment of concepts such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainable development, and sustainability in our vernacular.

1.2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development & Sustainability

According to Carroll (2015), CSR is predominately the byproduct of post-World War II, which peaked in the 1960s with the rise of various social justice and environmental movements, and has continued to evolve since. Though CSR has a long and varied history, resulting in multiple terms and definitions, at the core it is to “balance economic responsibilities with social and environmental ones” (Montiel, 2008, p. 246). Therefore, CSR is regarded as a firm’s response/strategy for sustainable development

where it voluntarily claims to operate within the three pillars of sustainability (Wesselink et al., 2015; Osagie et al., 2016; Demssie et al., 2019). As CSR is voluntary, firms can selectively decide what to self-report, which tends to focus on the positives and ignore the negatives, leading to inauthentic or false information being reported to gain legitimacy and a positive public image; a phenomenon known as greenwashing (Waddock, 2008; Delmas & Blass, 2010; Parguel et al., 2011). This is because CSR performance, whether negative or positive, has a direct impact on its intangible resources such as reputation (Patara & Dhalla, 2022).

Sustainable development, which is often used interchangeably with sustainability in both academic and mainstream discourse (Banerjee, 2003; Purvis et al., 2019), emerged from the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 43) to refer to “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainable development has been hotly contested not only because it is deeply rooted in Western ideas of progress and modernity via economic growth but also because it perpetuates the commodification of nature (Du Pisani, 2006; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022). Similar sentiments are also echoed by Banerjee (2003, p. 173) who notes

Sustainable development is to be managed in the same way development was managed: through ethnocentric, capitalist notions of managerial efficiency that simply reproduce earlier articulations of decentralized capitalism in the guise of ‘sustainable capitalism.’

While the word sustainability only came into our lexicon during the 20th century, the *idea* of sustainability is an ancient one (Du Pisani, 2006). For instance, there is evidence that Mesopotamian, Roman, Greek, and Egyptian civilizations also experienced environmental impacts from their exploitation of nature (e.g., deforestation) (Frankopan, 2023). Thus, the idea of sustainability has been a “constant issue throughout human history” (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 85). However, today’s sustainability issues are unparalleled to our ancient counterparts given the population size, affluence, consumption patterns, and technology (de Vries, 2013). From a Western context, sustainability has become ubiquitously linked with the balancing and/or integration of environmental, social, and economic pillars “without much disciplined thought about how it does and does not translate into a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability” (Thompson, 2017 as cited in Purvis et al., 2019, p. 682).

Moreover, despite over five decades of sustainable development and CSR initiatives (ElAlfy et al., 2020), overall sustainability continues to degrade (United Nations, 2016). Inequalities continue to widen, the natural environment is deteriorating “at an alarming rate” (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2021, p. 3705), biodiversity loss endures (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022; Thompson, 2022), hunger is increasing (United Nations World Food Programme, 2023; United Nations World Health Organization, 2022), including in Western countries such as Canada and the US where food bank usage is on the rise (Brooks, 2022; Pasieka, 2023), and “climate change [is] already worse than expected” (Mulvaney, 2022). In fact, Porter and Kramer (2011) suggest the greater the uptake of CSR the more business is blamed for society’s ills. However, even responses to combat the shortcomings of CSR such as Porter and Kramer’s (2011) *shared value creation* are besieged with the very problems they claim to be solving (Karnani, 2007), discussed further in Section 3.3.2. This is because sustainability in the West is largely pursued with the same mindset that created the problem (Prádanos, 2013), underpinned by the West’s ideas of progress, development, and growth, which are pushed through universalism, domination, and ideas of superiority and modernity; the embodiment of eurocentrism.

1.2.4 Eurocentrism

Eurocentrism (also known as Western-centrism or Westernization) is a framing of world histories, views, values, theories, reasoning, and standards that are defined and deployed by Europeans to the rest of the world as universal truths (Sabaratnam, 2013; Sundberg, 2014). Eurocentrism promotes the idea that European values and histories are superior to non-Western ideals while negatively stereotyping and discriminating against non-Western societies, cultures, customs, and people in blatant and clandestine ways (Wijesinghe et al., 2019).

Eurocentrism began to emerge during Europe’s Renaissance period but took hold during its ‘enlightenment’ whereby Europeans began falsely portraying non-Western societies by “misreading, grossly exaggerating, and/or distorting the historical role of Europe, particularly its historical role in the modern world” (Wallerstein, 1997, p.31; Pokhrel, 2011). Wallerstein (1997) suggests there are five avatars of eurocentrism 1) historiography (i.e., European historical achievements); 2) universalism (particularly through science); 3) civilization; 4) Orientalism (i.e., negative framings of non-Western societies); and 5) progress. Similarly, Sabaratnam (2013) categorizes three variants of

eurocentrism, which broadly align with Wallerstein's five avatars – culturalist (civilization and Orientalism), historical (historiography), and epistemic (universalism).

Eurocentrism was transported over by Europeans who colonized and settled in the lands known today as Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand – the countries, along with Europe, which comprise the West, and as such, Western and European are used interchangeably. While eurocentrism is entangled racially with the white race, religiously via Christianity, philosophically through the enlightenment, economically by way of capitalism, and geographically with the West, it is not that simple (Shohat & Stam, 2009). This is because eurocentrism has knowingly and unknowingly been disseminated globally through systems such as slavery, religion, colonization, academia, and globalization and as such, has consciously and unconsciously permeated into non-white and non-Western societies alike (Wijesinghe et al., 2019).

Therefore, eurocentrism is the *dominant mindset* that governs the world today, which originated from and is perpetuated by the (discursive) West. Even though formal European colonization has ended, the underlying *mindset* that justified European colonialism and imperialism (i.e., eurocentrism) for over 500 years has not (Hemais et al., 2021). Further, one can be an atheist, socialist, a person of color (PoC), be born and raised in the non-West, and hold and advance eurocentric views. In other words, eurocentrism is not about geography, race, ethnicity, economic, political, or philosophical ideologies, it is about the *dominant mindset* (Mignolo, 2011b). Examining sustainability through the lens of eurocentrism is critical because it is the way the world fundamentally operates; based on norms and values determined and dictated by the West (Young, 2020), which includes how sustainability issues are perceived, represented, and engaged.

To be clear, this study does not critique eurocentrism because it embodies perspectives of Europeans or Westerners (as a plurality of perspectives have the right to exist) but because eurocentrism purports that Western/European knowledge and ideals are universal and superior, which in turn not only rejects other perspectives but other ways of knowing, doing, and thinking. Furthermore, eurocentrism does not embody all Western thought simply because it is derived from a Western context or that all Europeans and European descendants subscribe to eurocentrism.

For example, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau (known as transcendentalists because they were strongly influenced by Hindu spiritual traditions), expressed not only their wonderment of nature but the “mystical relation between man and nature” in an era that favored (and still does) the

commodification of nature (Riepe, 1967; Myers, 1975, p. 432; Klostermaier, 2007). However, transcendentalism is not the dominant discourse on the environment or sustainability in the West. Rather, the dominant discourse on sustainability is reflected through sustainable development, which “epitomizes the modern *Western idea of sustainability* [that] was brought to the forefront of the world’s academic and policy agenda with the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] in 2015” (Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022, p. 1).

1.2.5 Eurocentric Sustainability

This “Western idea of sustainability” refers to responses that are pursued as if economic growth can be decoupled from environmental destruction, most notably through decarbonized or green economic and technological prescriptions such as carbon markets, renewable energies, electric vehicles (EVs), carbon sequestration (Fox, 2022; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022 p. 1). These directives not only often fail to address underlying conditions of unsustainability but tend to amplify the problems; namely through promoting lifestyles of mass overconsumption, convenience, and comfort, which are often attained at the expense of nature and ‘developing’ countries (Banerjee, 2003; Agyeman et al., 2016; Gibson-Graham et al., 2019; Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022).

Further, many of the responses to sustainability problems are embedded in the illusion of progress and development that caused much of our unsustainability in the first place (Du Pisani, 2006). As Skolimowski (1974, p. 75) pointed out five decades ago, progress has resulted in “excessive preoccupations” with physical and technological inventions – the “mechanization of the cosmos.” These inventions paired with capitalism have created an artificial demand whereby problems are sold to people to peddle a ‘solution’ for unnecessary products and services, driving overconsumption and waste (Behr, 2010; Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020). Such inventions and manufactured demands are embedded in creating a world of comfort and convenience that is not only unsustainable and thus, responsible for much of the world’s sustainability problems (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019) but also “at the expense of great anxieties [i.e., mental health] about how to maintain this comfort...[which] does not by itself add up to a happier life” (Skolimowski, 1974, p. 79). Rather, happiness is intrinsically connected with subjective well-being (Pradhan et al., 2023). Thus, Skolimowski (1974, p. 53) characterizes the Western idea of progress as pragmatic, empiricist, scientific, exploitive, and elitist

pragmatic because this progress is mainly preoccupied with material gains and practical improvements for the immediate future; empiricist because the world is viewed through the empiricist spectacles as basically made of physical parts

interacting in a mechanical fashion; ...elitist because this progress has actually benefitted very few at the expense of very many, and at the expense of natural resources belonging to all.

Ideas of progress have also led us to believe that sustainability problems, such as climate change can be predominately solved through technology and market responses despite the unsustainability of many of the directives to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For example, the solar energy industry currently has no strategy for managing discarded solar panels, which only have a life expectancy of 30 years and thus, are anticipated to generate high amounts of “solar trash” when customers begin trading in their existing models for “newer, cheaper, more efficient [ones...that] could total 78 million tonnes by the year 2050” (Atasu et al., 2021).

A similar situation is expected when batteries for EVs reach their end of life, which are also not designed with recycling or disposal strategies in mind, and thus, a “mountain” of trash is also anticipated (Lim, 2021). Further, batteries require vast quantities of finite raw materials that need to be extracted such as cobalt and nickel, which also have a high environmental impact (Lim, 2021). This does not include all other materials required to manufacture said technology such as metal and other components that are flown in from around the world (Pittis, 2022). There are also human rights violations associated with the extraction of raw materials, bringing into question issues of child and slave labor (Lim, 2021). Moreover, these responses are not only dependent on the appropriation of resources and labor from the ‘developing’ world but around servicing Western growth, reminiscent of colonialism (Hickel, 2021).

Economic instruments also have similar problems. For example, aside from not having met environmental targets to date, carbon markets are characterized as being economically unpredictable and easily manipulated for “quick and dirty profit-making” schemes; they also perpetuate the commodification of nature and operate under the assumption that technology will solve environmental issues, yet are known to lead to further sustainability problems (Spaargaren & Mol, 2013, p. 175; Gibbs & O’Neill, 2017). Moreover, market responses are not designed to reduce absolute levels of production and consumption, rather they encourage higher consumption created through the rebound effect, as efficiencies gained, often lead to greater consumption (Binswanger, 2001; Hertwich, 2005).

Further, technological and economic prescriptions are aimed at maintaining Western values, lifestyles, and consumption, and thus, “This hegemonic idea of sustainability is deeply ingrained in

Western materialist, individualist and positivist worldviews... an ethnocentric proposition that does not acknowledge other cosmovisions” (Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022, p. 3) or what is also known as pluriversality – other ways of thinking, knowing, and doing (discussed further in Section 1.4).

Velasco-Herrejón et al (2022) refer to this as *Western sustainability* whereas Jammulamadaka (2015) refers to this as *eurocentric CSR* when speaking from a business management perspective. This study takes these ideas and broadens them to *eurocentric sustainability*.

Eurocentric sustainability refers to sustainability problems and responses created, shaped, and disseminated based on Western values, judgment, epistemology, and hermeneutics that overshadow discourse and practice through universalism, superiority, domination and oppression, and modernity. It perceives sustainability problems and responses through capitalist ideals of profit maximization, competition, property rights, the commodification of nature, and an overemphasis on technological and market prescriptions that do not seek to address underlying conditions.

Eurocentric sustainability promotes overconsumption, as well as illusions of creating comfort, happiness, and contentment, which are justified by individualism (e.g., entitlement, personal freedoms, and rights). Like eurocentrism, eurocentric sustainability is not specific to race or geography but is predicated on the domination of Western knowledge, values, and epistemology and the illusion of their superiority and universality. Similarly, sustainability discourse and practice are presented as universal and superior in knowledge that all others need to learn from and adopt yet “The principle of sustainability appeals to enlightened self-interest” (i.e., individualism) (Porter & Kramer, 2006, p. 82). As such, there is an imperative to continue problematizing this dominant eurocentric sustainability because as Hoffman (2023, para.6) notes

To fix a system’s breakdown, we need to fix the system that causes it: capitalism. But our theories are predicated on maintaining that system, searching for ways to make “the business case” and gain market advantage when addressing climate change.

However, focusing just on capitalism alone is insufficient, it has to start with mindsets. Therefore, examining sustainability through the prism of eurocentrism is crucial, as the dominant discourse and practice have largely been developed, controlled, and based on a eurocentric mindset underpinned by Western judgment, values, and epistemology. This in turn shapes how sustainability problems and responses are created, framed, (mis)interpreted, perpetuated, and disseminated (D. Taylor, 2000; Banerjee, 2003; Agyeman et al., 2016; Ala-Uddin, 2019; Craven, 2020; Amo-Agyemang, 2021).

To reemphasize, the term eurocentric does not suggest that non-Western peoples do not contribute to eurocentric sustainability. For example, Prahalad, a non-Western scholar alongside Hammond advocates for businesses profiting off the poor through their *bottom of the pyramid* proposition (Hammond & Prahalad, 2004), discussed further in Section 3.3.2. Yet at the same time, it is important to note that given the eurocentricity of academia, non-Western scholars are not only taught eurocentric theories and curricula but are often expected and forced to accept dominant Western narratives regardless if they agree or not, if they want to achieve academic success (Karodia & Soni, 2014; Wijesinghe et al., 2019), which may serve to reinforce eurocentric accounts rather than allowing for fresh perspectives (G. D. Sharma and Handa, 2021).

This is further perpetuated by Western research methodologies, as well as the power dynamics and imbalances between the scholar and those who hold prominent positions in academia, which are mostly occupied by Western gatekeepers (Subramani & Kempner, 2002; Karodia & Soni, 2014). As a result, non-Western scholars are often forced to shape and negotiate their work based on accepted norms engendered by Western ideologies (Naidoo, 2003). Western scholars are often given greater power and latitude to identify and decide what phenomenon to research, what methodology to use, what story to tell, and how to narrate it (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). This does not suggest this is the case for all scholars, particularly when many have challenged these disparities. Further, many non-Western and Western thinkers have been confronting aspects of eurocentric sustainability in various forms and disciplines over the last several decades, particularly through the critiques of Western notions of development, growth, progress, and modernization; much of which is embedded in the *degrowth* discourse. Their contributions are the basis of this study.

The degrowth discourse, which describes sustainable development as an “oxymoron”, confronts many dimensions of eurocentric sustainability such as advocating for less consumption and production and challenging the notion that modernization through economic and technological instruments are the solutions to unsustainability (Demaria et al., 2013; Demaria & Kothari, 2017). While the origins of the term degrowth are murky, the idea of degrowth has been in existence in the non-West long before it gained agency in the West (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019). Regardless of its origins, the discourse has been created, shaped, and influenced by Western and non-Western scholars alike.

However, many scholars argue that degrowth’s traction in the West is reproducing “longstanding (neo-) colonial asymmetries by (once again!) setting the agenda on what ought to be done to solve

problems of global relevance in the Global North ...thereby re-enact[ing] its colonial role” – i.e., the ‘coloniality of degrowth’ (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019, p. 246). Spivak Chakravorty’s criticism that imperialism has been replaced “with policies of economic restructuring under the guise of sustainable development” was one of the first to challenge the degrowth discourse for its eurocentric trajectory (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019, p. 246). In the same vein, Muradian (2019) argues that degrowth is promoting the values of middle-class Western people while ignoring not only issues of equality and justice but also the perspectives and desires of others who yearn for upward socioeconomic mobility. All this to say, even though the degrowth discourse confronts aspects of eurocentric sustainability, it also reinforces other aspects of it, and as such, these debates serve to illuminate a plurality of perspectives (discussed further in Section 1.2.8).

1.2.6 Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME)

Additionally, sustainability discourse and practice in business management (i.e., sustainability management) tend to focus primarily on large and multi-national corporations (MNCs) (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002; Waddock, 2008; Sáez-Martínez et al., 2016). However, in most world economies small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), firms with less than 500 employees, are the most conventional category of business in the private sector and account for 70% of global employment (World Economic Forum, 2021). Moreover, SMEs collectively contribute to 70% of global pollution and 60% of GHG emissions (Koirala, 2018; 2019). SMEs also help produce and drive technology-based responses to sustainability problems (Government of Canada, 2023) and are customers and suppliers to MNCs. As such, both the role and impact of SMEs are significant from economic and sustainability perspectives.

However, SMEs have historically been neglected by institutions and officials when it comes to environmental policies in comparison to large firms (Fassin, 2008). There are various reasons for the magnified focus on large companies, such as their higher profile and public disclosures of CSR statements and data (Battisti & Perry, 2011). Additionally, in the past, SMEs were perceived as miniature versions of large businesses whereby findings produced for big corporations (e.g. theories, standards, and frameworks) were often generalized for SMEs, as it was assumed that findings from large firms can be extrapolated for SMEs; however, research continues to reveal that simply does not hold true (Battisti & Perry, 2011).

SMEs are unique and heterogeneous, particularly when it comes to their business model, type, size, industry, policy, and country (Koirala, 2018; 2019) and as such, they are often without a collective voice. Further, unlike larger corporations, SMEs have a low reliance on capital markets; and profit maximization and expansion are not imperatives for many SME owner-managers (Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015), suggesting much of capitalism is reflected in larger companies. As such, SMEs are drastically distinct from their larger counterparts, particularly when it comes to motivators for environmental action (Brammer et al., 2012).

While many studies have investigated the environmental impact of SMEs, as well as the motivations, values, and perceptions of owner-managers engaging in environmental action (e.g., Hammann et al., 2009; Brammer et al., 2012; Cantele and Zardini, 2020; Schaefer et al., 2020), they primarily draw from Western perspectives. Whereas perspectives from non-Western peoples are not well understood, which is noteworthy given that many Western nations depend on immigrants from non-Western countries to meet their population and economic goals (Flanagan, 2020). Further, immigrants disproportionately hold self-employment positions compared to native-born entrepreneurs in Western countries (Abada et al., 2012; Picot & Ostrovsky, 2021).

SME scholarships in the West that might consider the perspectives of non-Western peoples are generally limited to ethnic, minority, and immigrant entrepreneurship, which may be conflated but the three scholarships are distinct (Chaganti & Greene, 2002). Ethnic entrepreneurship is commonly cited as “differences between categories of people ...[via] a set of connections and regular patterns of interaction among people sharing common national background or migration experiences” (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990, p. 112). Ethnicity is generally determined by self-identification to a specific ethnic group and is not necessarily bound to race (National Research Council (US) Panel on Race, Ethnicity, 2004). This work has largely translated into the ethnic enclave theory to explain why some ethnic entrepreneurs tend to gravitate towards self-employment and is premised on the idea that ethnic entrepreneurs are more likely to be successful if they can access ethnic resources such as finances, labor, and markets (Nakhaie, 2015). Whereas ethnic entrepreneurs may be born in the country where they are self-employed, immigrant entrepreneurs are born in another country (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013); typically from “less developed countries” who experience difficulty in securing paid employment due to discrimination and therefore, turn to self-employment for economic survival (Fregetto, 2003). Enterprises pursued by those not from the dominant group, such as women may fall under minority entrepreneurship (Chaganti & Greene, 2002).

A common thread among these three scholarships is that they generally examine disparities experienced by non-dominant groups, particularly issues of earning disparities and economic (im)mobility, which are often related to ethnicity, race, language, and gender (Raimi et al., 2023). Given that ethnic, minority, and immigrant entrepreneurship are typically dedicated to examining issues of disparities, are highly nuanced, and have established meaning and context, this study does not use these terms and instead refers to *diverse SME owner-managers*, specifically whose family origins are from a non-Western country regardless of where they were born. Another reason for not engaging in ethnic or immigrant scholarships is the aim of this study is to contribute to mainstream sustainability management scholarship given the lack of plurality in these scholarships.

Understanding a plurality of perspectives on sustainability is crucial because not only does sustainability mean different things to different people (Banerjee, 2011) but the way sustainability problems are portrayed and understood is instrumental in understanding what solutions are perceived as achievable (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009). Further, it has been well established that SMEs' environmental engagement is strongly influenced by the owner-managers' values (Hammann et al., 2009; Brammer et al., 2012; Schaefer et al., 2020). Values tend to be informed by ethics and for many, ethics are guided by spirituality (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019).

1.2.7 Spirituality & Culture

Scholars such as Del Rio and White (2012) argue that despite the conflation between religion and spirituality, the two are distinct and should be treated as such. There are several reasons for this distinction which are discussed in Section 3.3.3. For one, religion is a concept largely derived and understood from a "Christian-European" context (Mandair, 2009). Two, spirituality does not necessarily suggest a belief in God or religion (Dhaka et al., 2022). This study views spirituality and religion as distinct and focuses on the former.

Spirituality is a word from the English language, derived from the Latin word, *spiritus*, the 'breath of life' (Luetz & Nunn, 2023, p. 2036). While there is no universal definition for spirituality, the one used by this study is an "attitude toward life, making sense of life, relating to others" (Del Rio & White, 2012, p. 123). Spirituality can provide a sense of purpose, meaning, consciousness, and connection to others (Gupta & Agrawal, 2017). Spirituality is also a "motivational force not mirrored by economics or science and other secular messaging" (Fair, 2018, p. 4). More importantly,

spirituality “is instrumental in understanding the inseparable connectivity between the planet and all living things, including humans” (Leal Filho et al. 2022, p. 9).

Luetz and Nunn (2023) suggest that spirituality is fundamental to culture. Culture refers to ideas and interactions that influence a group of people on how to think, act, and feel (Markus & Conner, 2014). Whereas Grimshaw (2018) suggests the relationship between spirituality and culture is not one-directional, as they both inform and shape one another. Culture is also important when examining sustainability because “much of our relationship with the world around us is a result of culture” (Leal Filho et al. 2022, p. 3). Further, culture is not static despite being developed from historical significance (Castro, 2004).

Another reason that spirituality and culture are integral to sustainability is that more than half of the world’s human population observes some form of religious or spiritual tradition (D. Sharma et al., 2023). As Chapter 3.3.3 will explain, spirituality within sustainability management, illuminates the importance of principles of moderation, doing no harm, appropriate resource use, and being satisfied with “having enough” (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019, p. 268). Yet, spirituality and culture are largely absent from sustainability management literature – for instance, Matten and Moon (2004) found only 1% of CSR research has a focus on spirituality. This is also reflective of the broader sustainability discourse, particularly as the “nexus between spirituality and sustainability is not explicitly addressed” (Luetz & Nunn, 2023, p. 2036). For example, in Fleming and Vanclay's (2009, p.15) discourse study on farmers’ perception of climate change, *Mother Nature*, which they describe as “a divine metaphorical personification that embodies creative and restorative power”, was a key discourse, yet there was no reference to spirituality or culture.

Moreover, different cultures and languages have different words for sustainability or may not have an explicit word for sustainability or it may not be conceptualized the same way as it is in the West but have cosmovisions that innately embody the essence of sustainability, which may be intertwined with spiritual ideas such as *buen vivir* (Escobar, 2015), *ubuntu* (Adams et al., 2018), *Mother Earth* (Nunez, 2011; Ramirez, 2021; Frankopan, 2023), and *kaitiakitanga* and *whanaungatanga* (Awatere et al., 2017). Many of these non-Western cosmovisions have similar and overlapping qualities and connotations with one another, such as the interdependency and innate value of the natural world, or what van Norren (2020, p. 431) refers to as “inherent biocentric value orientation”, which they suggest are “more promising” than eurocentric approaches such as modernism.

Non-Western cosmovisions or what they represent are often not included in mainstream sustainability discourse (van Norren, 2020). This absence can be attributed to the evolution of eurocentrism which not only promotes the superiority and universality of Western values, ideas, and knowledge but also because eurocentrism seeks to replace spirituality with science and capitalism (Wallerstein, 1997; de Sousa Santos, 2009). Eurocentrism also endorses the view that humans are separate and superior to nature (Norde, 1997), creating and perpetuating the nature-culture divide (Banerjee, 2003; Mignolo, 2011b). Rather, the West promotes the SDGs as the universal and superior path towards sustainability, which van Norren (2020, p. 431) argues are not “biocentric aiming to respect nature for nature’s sake, enabling reciprocity with nature [but exemplifies] linear growth/results thinking which requires unlimited resource exploitation, and not cyclical thinking replacing growth with well-being (of all beings) ... [rather it] represent[s] individualism.”

1.2.8 Pluriversality & Just Sustainabilities

The above chronicling serves to highlight the imperative to embrace pluralistic understandings and approaches to sustainability; non-Western cosmovisions illuminate this plurality. Further, there is no universal or right perspective on sustainability; rather all perspectives have the right to be part of the sustainability pluriverse whereas the universality and superiority of Western cosmology deny this possibility, resulting in a lack of plurality (Mignolo, 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

These gaps in literature exist not only because they lack plurality but also because of Western approaches to research that seek to generalize, theorize, and universalize phenomena whereby theories and knowledge created in one context are seen as universally applicable in other contexts (Sabaratnam, 2013). However, as knowledge is created by individuals influenced by their geography, and worldviews, knowledge must be seen as localized (Mignolo, 2009). Yet, the superiority and universality of Western epistemology and hermeneutics serve as gatekeepers and prevent other ways of knowing, thinking, and doing (i.e., pluriversality) (Mignolo, 2018). Pluriversality sees beyond this superiority, which can be regarded as an approach to knowledge and meaning beyond the limits of Western epistemology and hermeneutics (Mignolo, 2018).

Just Sustainabilities (JS), which is the focus of the first study, is one approach to pluriversality and/or gaining a plurality of perspectives. JS connects issues of social justice (e.g., race, gender, class) to the environment; premised on the idea that there are multiple ways to see and experience a problem, as well as multiple ways to address a situation, as panacea solutions rarely exist (Agyeman et al., 2016).

JS does not endorse hierarchical modes of organizing nor does it promote a singular conception or approach (Agyeman et al., 2016). It also does not strive to be theoretically or geographically conclusive or comprehensive, as context matters (Agyeman et al., 2003), which are all features of pluriversality. Rather, JS provides common ground between sustainability and justice, as well as practical action, particularly around policy (Agyeman et al., 2003).

1.2.9 Research Gaps & Conclusion

At first glance, the various scholarships and concepts discussed may appear to be discrete and fragmented. However, the above chronicling elucidates not only how these topics relate to one another but also how they are core to and shape contemporary sustainability discourse. While this dissertation does not engage with all these concepts equally, their inclusion serves to not only provide the rich context and nuance necessary for a study of this nature but also illuminate several research gaps.

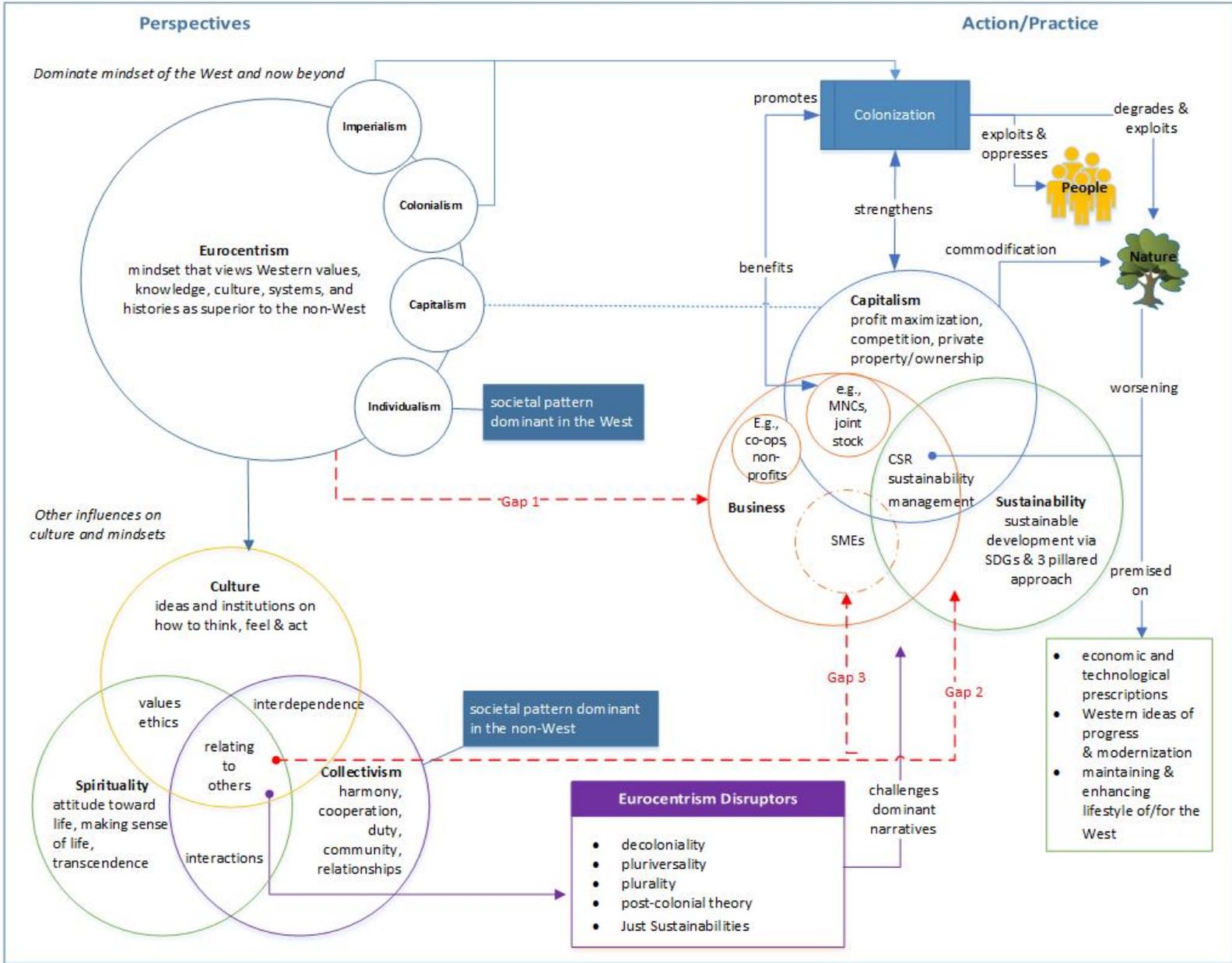
Despite over 50 years of various sustainability efforts, sustainability issues continue to worsen. The causes of unsustainability are known yet the same responses are replicated under different names (Banerjee, 2003; Du Pisani, 2006; Agyeman, 2013). My thesis argues this is because the mindset that created the problem is the same one used to solve it (Prádanos, 2013). This mindset is eurocentrism. ***However, there are limited studies that explicitly examine eurocentrism within the context of business management, where much of the world's unsustainability stems from, highlighting gap number one.***

The literature review also highlights the lack of plurality in sustainability scholarship due to eurocentrism. As such, there is limited empirical inquiry examining what sustainability means to different people. This is important because the way sustainability “problems are framed and perceived are crucial factors in determining what solutions are seen to be possible” (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009, p. 12). Therefore, sustainability scholars and practitioners need to understand a diversity of sustainability perspectives from people around the world (G. D. Sharma & Handa, 2021), particularly as the ‘nature-culture’ divide continues to deepen (Banerjee, 2003; Mignolo, 2011b). Much of the limited scholarship that does exist within this domain tends to be conceptual or review papers, which are qualitative impressions from scholars. ***This demonstrates a second gap, the lack of empirical research on the interplay of spirituality, culture, and sustainability within business management.***

Furthermore, despite SMEs accounting for 70% of global employment and pollution, attention is primarily placed on large businesses. While several studies have explored the environmental impact of SMEs, including the values, motivations, and perceptions of owner-managers in engaging in environmental action (Hammann et al., 2009; Brammer et al., 2012; Schaefer et al., 2020), they largely draw from Western perspectives. This is a salient point for Western countries like Canada that heavily rely on immigration from non-Western countries. For example, in 2021 23% of people in Canada “are or have been a landed immigrant or permanent resident in Canada”, of which more than 60% are from a non-Western country (Statistics Canada, 2022) and “Immigrants are usually found to have higher business ownership rates than the native-born population” (Picot & Ostrovsky, 2021). ***Thus, a third gap is the lack of empirical studies examining perspectives on environmental and sustainability issues from diverse SME owner-managers.***

Figure 1 presents a synthesis figure to articulate the key concepts and research gaps that this study engages in, how they relate to one another, as well as points of synergies.

Figure 1: Synthesis Figure of Key Concepts, Points of Synergies, and Research Gaps



As this section comes to an end, there is also an obligation to provide clarity on the choice to use West/non-West. One of the byproducts of eurocentrism is the binary view of Europeans and ‘others’, which over time has led to many manifestations such as Western/non-Western, Global North/Global South, developed/developing, industrialized/non-industrialized countries, and so on (Wallerstein, 1997). Some of these terms are steeped in racism and colonialism and other labels are used to distinguish between rich and poor but they also serve to maintain hierarchies based on power and wealth, and in some cases “white saviorism” (Khan et al., 2022). While these terms are constantly in flux to “reflect the changing political and social environment...lumping diverse people into such broad groups ignores the different cultures, histories, and origins of communities around the world” (Khan et al., 2022, p. 3-4). Despite the extensive list of terms, none are without contention, shortcomings, or inaccuracies given the inherent problems of eurocentrism for which there is no foreseeable solution nor is ceasing their use a feasible option when there is a need to refer to groups of people (Khan et al., 2022).

While there is no desire to maintain divisive labels, there is a need to refer to groups of people in this research, and by doing so, this study may perpetuate this problem through the use of West/non-West. However, many of the sources consulted in this study across the various disciplines also do so through the lexicon of West/non-West, which is not intended to portray any one culture or country. Rather the terms are used to speak to the *dominant* discourse and are used discursively. More importantly, most scholars using these terms do so to problematize the binaries created due to eurocentrism rather than perpetuate it (Wallerstein, 1997; Jack et al., 2011). Similarly, this study operates within this discourse to problematize how eurocentrism influences and surfaces in past and present sustainability discourse. As such, within the context of eurocentrism, the West refers to the discursive West to reflect the geopolitical powers that produce dominant and discriminatory discourses (Jammulamadaka, 2015).

Additionally, Global North/South has become commonplace to distinguish between rich/industrialized/developed countries (much of the West) and poor/non-industrialized/developing countries (much of the non-West). Whereas the West/non-West, which is more prevalent in eurocentrism scholarship, largely speaks to culture and mindsets. For example, even though Japan is part of the Global North when it comes to markers of wealth and development, it is also considered part of the non-West with respect to culture. As this study is interested in examining perspectives, and perspectives may be influenced by mindsets and culture, it was more appropriate to use West/non-West vocabulary over Global North/South in this study.

1.3 Research Questions, Objectives & Contributions

Aimed at making meaningful and original contributions to both research and practice, this study responds to the three research gaps identified in Section 1.2.9 by problematizing eurocentric sustainability and adding the perspectives of people who have typically been excluded or overlooked in the sustainability discourse.

The *first research objective is to examine the implications of eurocentrism and JS within the context of business management*, as business is held responsible for much of the world's unsustainability (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Thus, the first study (Chapter 2) answers research questions *1a) What characterizations of eurocentrism and Just Sustainabilities are presented in business management literature? 1b) Who is creating and contributing to these discourses? 1c) Where do these scholarships intersect and diverge? and 1d) How are they relevant to the field of business management and CSR?* The results of the first study offer a global perspective on the implications of eurocentrism in business management, in which the focus gravitates to large corporations.

The *second objective is to respond to gaps identified both in Section 1.2 and by the first study, which are a) a need for greater attention on SMEs; b) understanding how people around the world perceive sustainability* (G. D. Sharma and Handa, 2021); and c) *examining the role of collectivism, culture, and spirituality in these understandings*. As such, the second study (Chapter 3) answers research questions *2a) How are the climate and sustainability discourses perceived by diverse SME owner-managers? 2b) What are the implications for action? and 2c) What influence does spirituality have on these understandings?*

While any number of conceivable groups could have been considered for this exploration, the sample population chosen for this study are SME owner-managers in Ontario, Canada's manufacturing industry whose family origins are from the non-West. The justification for this criteria is that the perspectives from non-Western peoples in SME scholarship exploring sustainability are sparse. Just as there is a lack of plurality in sustainability discourse, there is also a lack of plurality in SME scholarship examining environmental action and values.

Therefore, the *third research objective seeks to understand if the motivators, support mechanisms, and constraints for the dominant group found in extant literature are similar and applicable to people from non-dominant groups and identify if there are additional factors to consider* and by

doing so, the third study (Chapter 4) delves deeper into implications for action (stemming from research question 2b) to answer the research question 3a) *What are the motivators, enablers, and barriers for diverse SME owner-managers in Ontario's manufacturing sector in pursuing environmental action?*

As this study aims to contribute to the pluriverse of sustainability, it does not seek to generalize or theorize these perspectives or aim to have them applied to other settings, as there are multiple realities and truths that are based on localized context and knowledge (Mignolo, 2018). Hoffman (2023) asserts that “outdated research culture and norms that dominate business school scholarship” need to be challenged, which includes a shift away from “theory fetish” that not only prevents conveying interesting phenomena but forces practical relevance to take a backseat. As such, pluriversality is crucial to sustainability management. One of the aims of this study is to offer a richer and more nuanced understanding of sustainability using a pluriversality approach and the problematization of eurocentric sustainability. For clarity, *this research does not aim to present non-eurocentric or non-Western perspectives, as that not only is unachievable given the pervasiveness of eurocentrism, but it would also be next to impossible to disentangle what perspectives are entrenched in colonial histories and which are not. This study simply presents the perspectives of people typically not heard from.*

My dissertation aims to make a number of contributions and as such, the intended audience for this dissertation is varied and broad, which is discussed in Section 5.2. From a scholarly perspective, it includes business, entrepreneurship, CSR, sustainability, and spirituality scholars as well as those who are interested in eurocentrism, pluriversality, and diverse perspectives on sustainability. From a practical perspective, it includes sustainability leaders, governments, and SMEs.

1.4 Ontological and Epistemological Perspective and Theoretical Lens

As Section 1.2 describes, eurocentrism is a mindset that views European/Western knowledge, values, customs, culture, judgments, and norms as *superior* and *universal* which all others need to learn from through Western-imposed *modernity* and *domination*. Mignolo (2018, p. x) explains that modernity “is a successful fiction that carries in it the seed of the Western pretense to universality”, which underpins actions and attitudes (e.g., colonialism and imperialism). Colonialism is the *policy* or *practice* of appropriating political control over another country (Young, 2020). Imperialism is the *ideology* that governs the practice such as how colonizers settle in the lands of others (Kohn & Reddy, 2017). This can be through various forms of power, such as organized structures (e.g.,

religion, military, political, economic), institutions (e.g., IMF, WTO, World Bank), and discursive (e.g., harmful depictions of the non-West) (Banerjee, 2008). Whereas colonization is the *action* or *process* of settling among and/or instituting control over the indigenous peoples of that land (Kohn & Reddy, 2017).

Decoloniality then, is concerned with the epistemological, as well as cultural and spiritual issues embedded within eurocentrism and colonialism (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). According to Mignolo, (2011a, p. 273-274), decoloniality's historical roots began with the Bandung Conference in 1955 where 29 Asian and African countries congregated in Indonesia to find a common path and vision that was "neither capitalism nor communism", a delinking from the two major Western canons and that "democracy and socialism are not the only two models to orient our thinking and our doing." That was the 'decolonization' at the time, which is quite different from the contemporary version, which Young (2020) characterizes as *movements* to resituate "almost every aspect of [present-day] life" outside of Western thought – institutionally, politically, culturally, and socially.

A subsequent assembly in 1961 included several Latin American nations and through the works of Aníbal Quijano led to the coining of decoloniality in the late 1980s (Mignolo, 2011a; 2011b). Many scholars, Walter Mignolo, in particular, have been instrumental in advancing decoloniality in recent years alongside Arturo Escobar.

Decoloniality is not a theory (Mignolo, 2018; Young, 2020) though it is often (incorrectly) referred to as one, suggesting a misinterpretation and thus, perhaps a lack of understanding of its fundamental purpose. Rather decoloniality challenges Western epistemology (nature of knowledge) and hermeneutics (interpretation of language via imperial European languages), as the superior and universal approach to knowledge, which together, these two not only serve as gatekeepers but prevent other ways of knowing, thinking, and doing (Mignolo, 2018).

One illustration indicative of this that is pertinent to sustainability is the concept of nature. Nature in many non-Western cultures signifies the interdependencies among the biophysical, human, and non-human world where not only does nature have intrinsic value, but there is no distinction between nature and culture (Norde, 1997). Whereas in Western cosmology (philosophical contemplation of the universe), nature and culture are viewed as separate whereby nature has been reduced and relegated to a purveyor of resources (hence the term natural resources), which in the West is perceived as a sign of progress and modernity (Mignolo, 2011b). This mindset began to emerge when "Western Christians

asserted their control over knowledge about nature by disqualifying all coexisting and equally valid concepts of knowledge and by ignoring concepts that contradicted their own understanding of nature” (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 11), exemplifying not only the universalizing of Western cosmology but assuming a superior position for itself (Mignolo, 2018).

As such, the goal of decoloniality is to delink from eurocentrism, which includes delinking from an economy of accumulation, as well as “ego-centered personalities” who are driven by competition (Mignolo, 2018). The pluriverse (as opposed to the universe) is “seeing beyond this claim to superiority [whereby] pluriversality names the principles and assumptions upon which pluriverse of meaning are constructed” (Mignolo, 2018, p. x).

Thus, pluriversality (as opposed to universality) is concerned with understanding the various ways of knowing, being, and doing rather than a reductionist approach of generalizing or theorizing what has been observed, as often done with Western approaches (Escobar, 2018). In other words, pluriversality is a decolonial approach to knowledge and meaning beyond the limitations of Western epistemology and hermeneutics, challenging the universality inherent in Western coloniality and modernity, which introduces the concept of *border thinking* (Mignolo, 2018).

Border thinking is the space between modernity and coloniality – the “entanglement and the power differential” (Mignolo, 2018, p. xi), which implies a dimension of lived experience and response to modernity. However, the idea is not for the researcher to study the border using Western epistemology that they are comfortable with because that would imply the pluriverse is “out there” and the researcher is somewhere else and outside the pluriverse, which maintains “imperial epistemology of modernity” (Mignolo, 2018, p. xi). Rather the idea is “dwelling in the border”, not crossing it (Mignolo, 2018, p. xi). Put another way, the researcher does not observe the border and then writes about it, they inhabit the border – this is what decolonial thinking and doing is, and what contributes to and comprises the pluriverse. Mignolo (2018) states that while it has become “fashionable” to undertake such studies, most scholars are not dwelling in the borders; perhaps due to the restrictions of eurocentric academia.

Pluriversality understands there is more than one way of knowing, thinking, and doing, anything else would be a colonial project (Escobar, 2018b). Pluriversality also acknowledges that all viewpoints have the right to coexist in the pluriverse of meaning and does not seek to reject or suppress eurocentric perspectives (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In other words, it allows for a plurality of

perspectives rather than striving for universality and supremacy of certain perspectives held by the dominant group. As such, pluriversality may be expressed by adding to, evolving, contesting, or coexisting with extant discourse (Mignolo, 2018).

This suggests that movements under the contemporary banner of decolonization, as well as organizational responses under the canopy of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) *that seek to suppress or reject viewpoints not in their universe or speak on behalf of all/others*, are distinct and perhaps counter to decoloniality and therefore, why decoloniality should not be conflated with decolonization or EDI. Moreover, some decolonization and EDI movements have been criticized for purporting value-based ideals that only a select and self-appointed few are entitled to define and deploy that all others need to learn from, positioning themselves as superior to those who do not hold similar viewpoints (McWhorter, 2021). These criticisms are also reflective of eurocentrism and how the mindset that created the problem is the same mindset used to solve it (Prádanos, 2013) and thus, why “Intellectual Eurocentrism is a hard habit to recognize and unpack. It is an even harder habit to kick” (Sabaratnam 2013, p. 274).

This point is crucial because plurality can only be plural if it is an epistemological plurality (Vasconcelos & Martin, 2019), meaning it is not just about a plurality of perspectives, it is also the approaches to knowledge and meaning beyond the limited parameters of Western epistemology and hermeneutics (i.e., pluriversality). As such, there are “many possibilities for pluralizing the social sciences and humanities” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 10) whereby “pluriversal studies will travel its own paths as it discovers worlds and knowledges that the sciences have effaced or only gleaned obliquely” (Escobar, 2018, p. 83).

1.5 Methods

All three manuscripts include a detailed methods section that is relevant to the research questions and objectives. The purpose of this section is to present an overview with a focus on additional details on the methods not included in the manuscripts.

1.5.1 Research Design

The research design for Study 1 is a conceptual paper using a systematic literature review (SLR). Within the field of management, non-empirical research can be classified into theory, commentary/critique, review, and conceptual papers (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). Theory papers

propose a new theory whereas commentaries/critiques elucidate why a field of study “is moving in the wrong direction” (Cropanzano, 2009, p. 1305).

Review and conceptual papers both offer qualitative impressions of the extant scholarship, which includes an analysis of what we currently know, the timeline and progression of the theory or concept, as well as areas yet to be explored and offer a bridge between theories (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). They create novel arguments as a result of integrating data points from extant concepts and theories (Hirschheim, 2008). Review and conceptual papers also create new knowledge through methodically curated sources of information based on a set of norms (Jaakkola, 2020) and are oriented toward embracing and offering new relationships among extant constructs with the responsibility of advancing novel associations rather than empirically testing them (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015).

According to Whetten (1989), conceptual papers should be evaluated based on the following seven criteria: 1) What’s new? 2) So what? 3) Why so? 4) Well done? 5) Done well? 6) Why now? And 7) Who cares? While conceptual papers do not need to address all seven equally nor are they required to solve tensions in the domain, they should meticulously answer the question “what’s new” through a problem-focused approach, as this is the quintessential question that distinguishes a conceptual piece from a review paper (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015).

A narrative synthesis, a type of SLR (Popay et al., 2006) was employed for this study, as it is ideal for subjects that have been conceptualized in different ways and examined by different researchers within different disciplines (Snyder, 2019). Narrative reviews also allow for the exploration of how a field of study has evolved across research traditions to understand complex topics (Snyder, 2019), such as eurocentrism and JS.

For Studies 2 and 3, a qualitative non-experimental design using semi-structured interviews was employed. A qualitative approach enables researchers to understand the meaning of phenomena from the perspectives of participants and give meaning to these experiences (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Qualitative research supports a pluralistic approach, as it allows for multiple interpretations and meanings (Winchester, 2005). Studies using in-depth interviews are not “concerned with making generalizations to a larger population of interest” and thus, generally do not employ hypothesis testing but rather an inductive approach (Dworkin, 2012, p. 1319). Additionally, qualitative research is

shaped and influenced by the researcher's worldview and therefore, it may be useful for the researcher to disclose their positionality (Winchester, 2005).

Semi-structured interviews were selected as they can be adjusted and customized based on the flow and progression of the conversation, the personality of the participants, as well as the opportunity to ask additional and spontaneous questions to gain further detail or clarification (Berg, 2001). The interviews were guided by a list of prompts partially adapted from the works of Schaefer et al. (2020) and the TRANSFORM project. While there was only one interview guide, they are split into two to illustrate which questions served to answer research question 2 (Appendix A) and research question 3 (Appendix B). The interview guide was used to structure key questions and themes, as well as guide the conversation to foster continuity of dialogue and ensure the research objectives were met (Berg, 2001).

The interviews were conducted in English, which may have been an impediment for some participants whose first language is not English. For example, certain words caused confusion in some situations, such as the word 'barrier', which was understood in multiple ways by respondents and was not necessarily equated with a challenge that could be overcome but something unsurmountable or uncontrollable. Additionally, several participants perceived 'environmental impact' as synonymous with damage, which may be why some answered with 'nothing' when asked what environmental impacts they thought their business had or why some answered with their reduction efforts instead.

Lastly, this study does not have a control group, which refers to "A group of participants in a study that are not exposed to ... manipulation" (Seamon & Gill, 2015, p. 68), as they are not relevant for this research for three reasons. One, control groups are typically used in experimental and/or quantitative studies (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Two, this study does not manipulate or apply interventions to test a hypothesis. Three, the study purposefully does not make comparisons to other groups nor does it generalize the findings or present "universal truths" (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2019, p. 522) so there is minimal risk of overclaiming the results. My study simply presents the perspectives of my participants and their *potential* for broader meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.5.2 Sampling

The sample population for research questions 2 and 3 is based on four inclusion criteria:

1. The business is an SME (less than 500 employees). The justification for this criterion is that 90% of private businesses worldwide are SMEs (World Economic Forum, 2021); in Canada, the figure is 99.8% (Government of Canada, 2022). Globally, this equates to 70% of total employment (World Economic Forum, 2021), in Canada that number is 88% (Government of Canada, 2022). Further, SMEs are estimated to collectively contribute to 70% of global pollution (Hillary, 2004). These statistics serve to illustrate the significance of their impact and therefore, a case for focusing on SMEs.
2. At least one owner-manager self-identifies as a person of color (PoC) (owner-manager is a term commonly used in SME scholarship e.g., Hammann et al., 2009; Revell et al., 2010; Battisti & Perry, 2011; Williams & Schaefer, 2013). The rationale for this criterion is the lack of plurality in both SME and sustainability research, as it largely draws from Western perspectives whereas perspectives from non-Western peoples are not well understood.

To reiterate, this study does not seek to gain non-Western or non-eurocentric perspectives as it would be impossible to determine. Rather, the study seeks to gain a plurality of perspectives from those who are not typically heard from. A decision was made to focus on SME owner-managers whose family origins are from non-Western countries irrespective of where they were born. Though this research is not about race or ethnicity, PoC is used as a proxy for non-Western given the complexity, ambiguity, and contentiousness around terms such as West/non-West, PoC, visible minority, etc., particularly outside of academia, further discussed in the Research Limitations (Chapter 5.3).

No further limitations on race or ethnicity were imposed because a) the study does not seek to generalize or theorize the findings or have them applied to other contexts nor does it treat distinct ethnic or racial groups as homogenous; it simply presents the findings to offer more nuanced perspectives and therefore, the risk of generalizing and flattening is minimal; b) it would be difficult to justify on what basis which groups should be included/excluded; c) it would create unnecessary complexities as owner-managers may have multiple ethnicities or have family origins from one region but have grown up somewhere else (e.g., family origins are from China but born and raised in Jamaica, now living in Canada); and d) given that less than 4% of manufacturing businesses in Canada are owned by PoC (Government of Canada, 2020), further

limiting the sample population to specific ethnic or racial groups would have significantly impeded recruitment.

This study uses the term PoC however, it should be noted that the Government of Canada and Statistics Canada (2021, para 1), use the term *visible minority*, which they define as:

...persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

Based on the above categorizations, of Ontario's PoC population, 74% identify as being from the continent of Asia (South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese), 16% as black, 5% from Latin America, 3% as multiple identities, and 3% as "not included elsewhere" (Statistics Canada, 2019a). Ontario's immigration statistics show that 49% of recent immigrants come from Asia, 30% from Europe, 16% from the Americas (including the US), 6% from Africa, and under 1% from Oceania (Statistics Canada, 2019).

As the study's objective is to include the voices of non-Western peoples, the study chose to use the geographic regions developed by the United Nations Statistical Division (n.d.), as the working definitions of the *geographic* West and non-West are more closely aligned with this categorization. First-level geographic regions are used for Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Europe. However, for the Americas, since Canada and the US are considered part of the discursive West whereas all other countries in the Americas are not, second-level geographic regions of Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC) and Northern America are used instead.

3. The business is in the manufacturing sector based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 31-33. The justification is that the manufacturing industry:
 - a. is understudied despite its high environmental impact (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019);
 - b. is a high contributor to Ontario's GHG emissions, contributing to 23% of the total (Government of Canada, 2021). As a reference point, the transportation sector is responsible for 32% of total emissions and commercial and residential buildings account for 25% (Government of Canada, 2021);
 - c. encompasses a diverse range of businesses such as food, plastics, apparel, furniture, and electronics manufacturing – see Appendix C for a full list (Statistics Canada, 2017).

SMEs in Canada's manufacturing industry that are majority-owned by PoC is 3.8% (Government of Canada, 2020). As a reference point, the largest industry where the majority ownership is held by PoC is *Professional, scientific and technical services* at 18.2% and the smallest is *agriculture* at 1.2% (Government of Canada, 2020).

4. The fourth criterion is that the business is located in Ontario, Canada. The justification for the last condition is that 37% of Canada's SMEs (Government of Canada, 2022) and 29% of Canada's PoC population reside in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2023), making it ideal for empirical data collection.

1.5.3 Recruitment

Participants for Studies 2 and 3 were recruited in several ways. The first method was using the Ontario Business Directory (n.d.), an online resource that maintains information on 150,000 Ontario businesses. This database can be searched by categories, industries, and cities. Each business listing contains the following information: company name, phone, fax, contact person, mailing address, number of workers, sales, established year, industry sector, products/services offered, and category.

In the fall of 2021, the manufacturing industry contained 13,701 business listings. Each listing was manually checked to see if there were less than 100 employees (initially the scope was limited to small businesses but later expanded to include medium-sized businesses to help with recruitment). Next, based on the owners' name (typically listed as the contact person), an educated guess was made to determine if the owner may be from or a descendant of a non-Western country based on the owner's name (e.g., Smith, Jones, Hooper vs. Singh, Patel, Tsang, Ahmed, Hussein, Garcia). This was then verified by searching the internet for the business owner's picture using a combination of websites and searches, including LinkedIn profiles and Google images. It is acknowledged that this approach has limitations as it unknowingly excludes PoC with European names (e.g., through marriage, adoption, colonization, slavery, or by other means). However, this method was not to elicit a complete, accurate, or comprehensive list; it was simply to identify an *initial* pool of participants as a *starting point* as there were no other means to do so.

To understand the probability of error, 100 random businesses were selected from the list of 13,701 manufacturing businesses. A website called random.org was used to produce 100 random numbers, which were then entered into a spreadsheet. The corresponding number was matched up with the business name using the Ontario Business Directory (n.d.). For example, if random.org produced the

number 400 then the 400th manufacturing business listed in the database was selected. The name of each owner was found either through the Ontario Business Directory (n.d.) or by conducting an internet search of the business name. Next, a search of the business owner(s) name was conducted to see if they presented as a PoC regardless of the name. Out of the 100 businesses, the owner could not be found for seven of the businesses. Of the remaining 93 owners, pictures were found for 47, of which 41 presented as white and six as a PoC. There was one person out of the 47 with a photo with a European name (Smith) who presented as a PoC, which means they would have been erroneously omitted from the sampling method described above. Therefore, the margin of error is estimated to be around 2%.

Using the method described above, 521 businesses were identified as potentially eligible participants, representing 3.8% of 13,701, which interestingly is also the percentage of businesses in the manufacturing industry majority-owned by a PoC (Government of Canada, 2020). These businesses were recorded and maintained in a spreadsheet that included the business name, owner's name(s), number of owners, gender, size of the company, the year the company was established, city, phone number, email, NAICS code, and email address. Next, the contact method was identified for each business. Email addresses were found for 375 of the potential participants, 16 had an online form on their website, and for the remaining 130 businesses, only a phone number was found. Only those who could initially be reached electronically (by email or online form) were contacted due to the logistics of recruiting businesses by phone and social media (e.g., LinkedIn).

To contact the 375 businesses with an email address, the mail merge function in Word was used to send out the communication, which invited them to participate if they met the four criteria – see Appendix D for the study invitation. Every response received was noted in the spreadsheet whether they were willing, declined, wanted more information, or resulted in an error message or autoreply. A second email was sent two weeks after the original to those who did not respond and a third and final email one month after the second email. Interviews were scheduled immediately for those who expressed interest. Of the 375 that were contacted via email, a total of 48 responses were received, and 22 were interviewed. The other 26 declined, were ineligible (e.g., did not self-identify as PoC or are not in manufacturing), or agreed to participate but never responded again despite repeated attempts to reach them. For the 16 businesses that had an online form on their website, the invitation was sent using the form. No response was received from this method and only one attempt was made.

The second method included identifying and contacting various gatekeepers such as the local chamber of commerce of several major cities in southwestern Ontario, lobbyist groups for Canadian manufacturing, and organizations supporting PoC and indigenous SME owners. Sixteen gatekeepers were contacted, and only six replied, five of whom either said they could not help or would help but did not. Only one known gatekeeper forwarded the invitation, but it is not known how many recipients the invitation was sent to. This method yielded one interview.

The third method used snowball sampling in two ways. The first method asked recipients in the invitations to forward the email if they knew of other business owners who would be interested in participating –no contacts were received this way. The second approach was by asking participants at the end of each interview if they would be willing to connect me with potential participants in their network – three contacts were received with this approach. One was not in the manufacturing industry and therefore, was ineligible. The other two were contacted multiple times but no response was received. In summary, this method did not result in any interviews.

The fourth method was using my network, which included LinkedIn, email, and word-of-mouth. This method yielded ten interviews of which only one participant was previously known to me; the rest were contacts of my network and their network.

There are several limitations with the recruitment process. As previously mentioned, the first method unintentionally excludes PoC who have European surnames. Second, invitations may have gone to the recipients' junk/spam folder thus, never receiving it. At least one participant mentioned that my email landed in their junk folder. Additionally, recipients may have received the invitations and not have read them due to a variety of reasons such as the verbosity of the email and/or lack of time and interest. Based on some of the responses by the study's participants around knowledge (as discussed in Chapter 3.5.6), some recipients may have also chosen not to respond or participate because of their perceived lack of knowledge on the topic or comfort in communicating in English. Others may have also not understood the purpose of the research, for example, as the study was recruiting PoC, recipients of the invitation may have thought the study was on race-based issues.

1.5.4 Sample Size

Recruitment and data collection occurred over a period of five months, between April and August 2022. A total of 404 potential participants were contacted using the methods described above with a response rate of 16%, which includes those who responded to decline, were ineligible, or said they

would participate but did not. The result was 33 completed interviews – a participation rate of 8% of which 67% were recruited using the first method and 30% using the fourth method. This information is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Recruitment Statistics

	Method 1: Email	Method 1a: Online Form	Method 2: Gatekeepers	Method 3: Snowball	Method 4: Network	Total
Invitations sent	375	16	16*	2**	11	404
Error	4	0	0	0	0	
No response	323	16	9	2	0	
Responses	47	0	6	0	11	64 (16%)
Declined/Unwilling	18	0	5	0	1	
Ineligible	7	0	N/A	1	0	
Interviewed	22	0	1	0	10	33 (8%)
Percentage of total interviews	67%	0%	3%	0%	30%	

** Gatekeepers contacted not included in total ** participants who provided a name/contact*

Determining an adequate sample size for qualitative studies using interviews has generated both debate and variability in recommended minimums, resulting in ranges from 5 to 50 participants, as well as the question if there should even be recommended minimums (Dworkin, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Others advocate for the use of saturation as a technique for determining the sample size, which describes a scenario when no more new or relevant data surfaces from the data collection process (Charmaz, 2006). However, saturation is dependent on various factors, many of which may be outside the researcher’s control, such as available funding or the homogeneity of the sample population (Dworkin, 2012). Given the lack of homogeneity of the sample population, saturation was not an appropriate technique for this study.

More importantly though, qualitative studies are “often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on meaning...centered on the how and why of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene or set of social interactions” and thus, the sample size of qualitative studies are generally smaller than quantitative studies (Dworkin, 2012, p. 1319). Additionally, PoC typically have not been “predisposed to research participation” thus, research participation involving PoC is described as “particularly difficult” (Menzies et al., 2007, p. 268), further substantiating the lack of plurality. As such, the sample size of 33 was deemed reasonable for this study.

1.5.5 Participants

The geographic location for 85% of participants' family origin is from an Asian country, 9% from an LAC country, and 3% from an African country. These demographics are somewhat reflective of Ontario's demographics (74% Asia, 16% black, and 5% LAC) (Statistics Canada, 2019a). The region of birth for 55% of participants is Asia, 30% from Northern America (specifically Canada), 6% from Africa, 3% from LAC, and 3% from Europe. The gender demographics are 24% women and 76% men. The ages ranged from 22-83 years, the average age (mean) was 51 years, the middle value (median) was 50 years, and the most common age (mode) was 34 years. Finally, 42% consider English as their native or preferred language. This information is detailed in Appendix E, along with their education major and location.

According to the research design, the planned time to complete the interviews was estimated to be 30-60 minutes. The shortest interview was 15 minutes (of which there was only one) and the longest was 68 minutes; the average length of interviews was 37 minutes. Seven interviews were conducted at the owner-managers' place of business and 26 interviews were completed online using Zoom or Teams.

During the data analysis phase, to help provide insights into their perceptions of sustainability and climate change, I gaged the participants' level of engagement by assessing verbal (e.g., depth/breadth of answers) and non-verbal (e.g., body language) cues, knowledge, and environmental actions – see Table 2.

Forty-nine percent were assessed as being highly engaged; these conversations were often the longest (average length of 47 minutes). Participants spoke on a wide variety of issues often with passion and enthusiasm, and required little prompting and therefore, felt more like conversations. They exhibited both high knowledge of sustainability and climate issues, as well as higher engagement in environmental action.

Thirty percent were assessed with medium engagement where participants showed concern and also knowledge of sustainability and climate issues, but responses and demeanor were more subdued and often required prompting. The average length of these interviews was 32 minutes.

Twenty-one percent were perceived as being less engaged. These interviews were often the shortest (average length of 23 minutes) with brief answers that provided little detail and required prompting. In two cases, language barriers may have played a key factor in the brevity of the answers and thus, engagement. In another case (the participant with the shortest interview) was brief with their

responses while being recorded but once the recording stopped, they were much more relaxed and continued the conversation. With the remaining participants, I perceived a lack of interest in environmental issues, which was also observed by the lack of environmental knowledge exhibited and action taken. This does not suggest they have a lack of knowledge or interest; it was what I perceived based on what was exhibited and shared.

Table 2: Participants’ Perceived Level of Interview Engagement

	High (49%)	Medium (30%)	Less (21%)
Verbal Cues	Descriptive, thoughtful answers; did not require prompting	Thoughtful responses; required prompting for context	Terse/brief answers
Non-verbal Cues	Emotional, energetic, passionate	Less emotive demeanor	Less emotive demeanor
Knowledge	Spoke with confidence and comfort; exhibited solid understanding	Were unsure about their responses; responses were brief	Often could/did not provide an answer
Environmental Action	Going beyond basics; willingness to pay more for ‘green’ options	Basic practices such as recycling, proper disposal of waste	Self-reported as nothing or little

1.5.6 Data Analysis

The data analysis for Study 1 is fully described in Chapter 2. The focus of this section is to describe the data analyses more fully for Studies 2 and 3 that are not included in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Studies 2 and 3 use the same dataset from the semi-structured interviews conducted.

Interviews were recorded with permission using software called Otter, which was installed on my mobile phone. Otter was chosen because a) it saves a copy of the audio file to the cloud for backup and redundancy purposes; b) it auto-transcribes audio files into written form and outputted to a Word document; though the audio files were sent to a company called Transcription Hero to be fully transcribed; c) Otter does not require additional technology or equipment; and d) was cost-efficient. After receiving the transcribed data, they were imported into NVivo software where I reviewed them for accuracy while listening to the audio recordings, corrected mistakes, and then manually coded and analyzed the data, which also included the use of Excel, particularly for quantitative outputs and figures.

To analyze the data supporting research question 2, discourse analysis was applied (discussed in Chapter 1.5.6.1). Inductive thematic analysis was applied to qualitatively analyze interview data for research question 3 (described in Chapter 1.5.6.2).

1.5.6.1 Discourse Analysis

There are many approaches to discourse analysis but at the core of any discourse analysis is the “study of language in use” (S. Taylor, 2001). More specifically, it is a qualitative method for interpreting written, spoken, or sign language as social practice to better understand the broader social discourses by detecting patterns in communication (Miles, 2012; Gee 2014).

Discourses are specific uses of language in particular situations among social groups that serve to “transmit and construct culture, pass on traditions, [and] question the world”; over time, exposure to discourse shapes perceptions and therefore, influences how we think and act (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009, p. 12). Therefore, language use has consequences beyond the individual, as discourse influences how ideas are thought of, spoken, and acted on, which ultimately shapes public perceptions (Foucault, 1972). This is because language contains values, judgments, and attitudes; the way we talk about a subject can change our views about the subject and therefore, can be viewed and used as an instrument of power (Fairclough, 1995).

In addition to language use, discourse includes the formation of ideas, social roles, as well as actions (Foucault, 1972; Gee, 2005), and therefore, important to understand “how each discourse empowers and empowers, or disempowers, individuals within the discourse” (Fleming et al., 2014, p. 410).

Discourse analysis was applied to this study to understand perceptions and discourses on sustainability and climate, how these discourses gain currency, and how they may enable or constrain action (Fleming et al., 2014). Discourse analysis can be viewed as an “analytical toolbox or a cluster of concepts ...[to enhance] ‘think-ability’ and ‘criticize-ability’ ... [and are not] designed to generate universal truths” (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2019, p. 522).

Not aligning with any particular brand, S. Taylor (2001, p. 7-9) suggests there are four approaches to discourse analysis. With the first approach, the researcher is looking for the “variation and imperfection” of language in use whereby parts of the language (e.g., vocabulary, verb tenses, grammar, and expression) are examined. With the second approach, the researcher is searching for patterns between two or more language users (e.g., speakers) to examine “what the language users do.” This is known as the “activity of language use” whereas the first approach examines the language itself (S. Taylor, 2001). Both these approaches are static and reflect an oversimplified model, as it may not provide the context for the language in use, for example, the researcher may not know what has occurred before to situate the language use (S. Taylor, 2001).

With the third method, the researcher searches for patterns in the language connected to the topic in question (S. Taylor, 2001). This approach understands language is situated in a “particular social and cultural context” (p. 7) rather than being situated in a particular interaction, as done in the second approach. In the fourth method, which blurs with the third method, the researcher searches for patterns within a wider context (e.g., society or culture) to understand the importance of language within broader systems and activities. This is done by identifying “patterns of language and related practices and to show how these constitute aspects of society and the people within it” (S. Taylor, 2001, p. 9). This approach pays attention to both the historical and social nature of the world, which is often taken for granted.

I draw both from the third and fourth approaches, as I am searching for patterns in the language related to climate and sustainability, as well as how these understandings relate to practice/action and the influence spirituality has on these understandings. S. Taylor (2001) suggests that controversy is inherent in the fourth approach because it comprises the study of power, resistance, and struggles. This is because the language available to individuals empowers and disempowers their perceptions and actions, as they do not have full agency over their language and actions but that they are “heavily constrained” in their choices. Further, the researcher is also not immune to these “struggles and constraints but is one such user within them” (S. Taylor, 2001, p. 10).

There are limited sustainability studies using discourse analysis; the ones that do typically are non-empirical, use secondary sources, and tend to apply Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis to examine written text (e.g., documents and reports) such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Ala-Uddin, 2019) and parties' positions in climate change negotiations (Calliari, 2018). I employ Foucauldian discourse analysis and take a similar approach to Fleming and Vanclay's (2009) qualitative study which examines farmers' perceptions of climate change using semi-structured interviews.

While there is no step-by-step or linear process, discourse analysis involves becoming familiar with the data, which encompasses numerous readings of the transcripts, as well as listening to the audio recordings multiple times (Brunton et al., 2018). This process enables the generation of codes and detection of themes through an iterative process; however, in discourse analysis, they are not conceptualized as codes and themes but rather discursive constructions and discourses that pay attention to how sustainability and climate change were talked about and constructed (Brunton et al.,

2018). For example, in Fleming and Vanclay's (2009) study, interviewees spoke about climate change through four discourses but that does not suggest discourses are mutually exclusive, as participants can speak of a topic through more than one discourse.

I take a poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis, meaning that the findings are not considered or intended to be impartial, value-free, or a universal truth of reality, as that is not possible; rather the findings tell an interpretation of one (my) reality (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2019). This is because there is 'no single truth' there are only multiple realities and multiple truths, which cannot be objective (Escobar, 1995). Poststructuralism asserts "that the networks of power/desire/interest are so heterogeneous, that their reduction to a coherent narrative is counterproductive - a persistent critique is needed" (Spivak, 2003, p. 67). For this reason, 'truth claims' cannot be checked or verified against objective reality, and therefore, verifying results, such as duplicating research is not possible as it produces another version of a truth – this is known as the 'crisis of legitimation' that the researcher can be forever trapped in (S. Taylor, 2001).

With discourse analysis, it is unlikely to come to a point when there is nothing more to find, as "discourse data are 'rich'" and as such, the researcher will need to decide what to focus on and what to exclude, which is determined by patterns in language use, as well as elaborating on and consulting assumptions made about language (S. Taylor, 2001). S. Taylor (2001) suggests three possible ways to present findings for discourse analysis. The first approach outlines the exact approach to interpreting data and reaching conclusions, which is more appropriate when only a limited amount of data is being analyzed. This approach is not possible with my research given the vast quantity of transcript data that I have (over 400 pages). The second possible approach is only available for use if the theoretical approach allows language to be examined outside the original context, which my research design does not support.

With the third approach, the interpretation and analysis are conducted off-stage, and only a summary of select findings with illustrative examples that are the most interesting and/or complete are shared (S. Taylor, 2001). While this third approach is less transparent, this is the one I used because a) the reader does not have access to the full dataset; b) the discourse data are rich, and therefore, multiple interpretations can be inferred, distracting the reader from the researcher's main argument; c) it is not the goal of this research to have it replicated nor can it (S. Taylor, 2001). However, through Table 3 I show some of the data that informed my interpretation and selection of themes.

To conclude, applying discourse analysis assisted in understanding the perceptions and understandings that owner-managers communicated regarding climate change and sustainability, how they receive that information, and what they do with it.

Table 3: Research Question 2 Analysis

Raw Data (Responses)		First Order	Second Order
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Product - Policy - Packaging - Operations - Procedure - Stability - Security - Over time - Continuous - Replicate - Repeatable - Efficiency - Last longer - Surviving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing business - Not being dependent on government - Low costs - Being in business - Continue business operations - Maximizing utility of an object - Long-term growth - Ongoing without harm - Lifetime - We can grow and do better - Continuity of everything - Sustain itself - Future - Continuation of natural resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stability Survival Long-term Continuity Efficiency Security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longevity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Balance - Offsetting - Interconnected - Holistic - Every aspect - Continuous changes - Mother Nature/Earth - Harmony - Tree analogy - Flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There's no such thing - Constant flow - Make changes - Global/Earth warming - Carbon - Temperatures (heat waves) - Glacier melts, SLR - Natural resources - Plants, animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance Totality Adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interdependency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health - Equity - Future/next generations - Standard of living - Quality of life - Suffering - No/less harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labor/employee - Culture - Inclusivity - Accessibility (universal design) - Livelihood - Grandchildren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of life Future generations Livelihoods Human-oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's our duty - I feel like anything to prevent climate change is always put on us as individuals - We have to spend some money to save the environment - In Canada we are doing I think more than enough, but all other countries [are not] - Recycle - Reduce - Reuse - No/less harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our Earth trying to tell us subtly and not subtly that like what we're doing is not working and it's not helping and it's hurting - Government has to come up with laws and regulations and implementations. Enforcement - Giving us more information of how we can make it more environment friendly - It's important to take care of where you live ...just consider it like my own home. - Less damage - Environmentally friendly - Sustainable resource use - Irresponsible resource use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government Personal/Owner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dooms day - Brink of danger - Peril - Will we solve climate change? No. - Will we most likely perish - Bite us in the ass - Bomb - Crisis - We can't put things back - It can't be fixed or it can't be healed over time - Beyond our control - Uncontrollable - Irreversible impact - Natural hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Things going in the wrong direction - Reached the point of no return - I have a very pessimistic view - It's not getting any better - There's a lot more talk and less action taking place - From what it sounds like it's going to be quite catastrophic - When I cannot do something I ... never think about that - Doesn't mean much. - I won't stop flying/driving - It means absolutely nothing - Nothing you can do 	<p>Irreversible Catastrophic Beyond control Apathy</p>	<p>Pessimism</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ...our understanding of progressiveness, advancement ... it means that more and more waste and more and more consumption is, it proves my point that how superior I am - ... we are never satisfied - And they're looking for convenience. They're looking to make their lives easier. You have to compete in order to prove yourself - Society has become greed-based. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have to simplify our lifestyle, and simplifying lifestyle means, we have to get used to a lot of discomfort, because we are so addicted to comfort - ... anyone who enjoys the benefits of living in a first world economy, you have to think of these developing countries, because your largess has been on the backs of it - ... humans need and want for more consumption - It's not our land 	<p>Competitiveness Overconsumption Unsatisfied Greed Comfort Convenience Exploitation</p>	<p>Superiority</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... growth mechanism is part of the problem - ... the capitalist view is we have to keep consuming to continue to grow but, at the same time, that's unsustainable to continue to grow and consume while trying to be sustainable seems to be an oxymoron 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We don't mind paying a little bit extra to be more environmentally friendly, but we just don't know [who to trust or what to do]". - Insane amount of packaging which could be saved. Insane amount of food which is wasted. Absolute crazy consumerism, materialism 	<p>Trust Inconsistencies</p>	<p>Paradoxical</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That was a bad idea, but [MNC] said we have to do it, so we did - ...any time I interact with a customer ... we're trying to build our relationship or we're trying to make them happy or happier. You never want to say something that they're going to not like. You know, you don't even want to suggest it. You don't want the conversation to feel like that. Right? You always want it to be happy and light and friendly. So, you're very careful of what you bring up to customers because you have a certain mood and a certain – and it's – you're careful with the things that you recommend because we're always trying to recommend things that are going to help grow the business versus you know, reduce our environmental footprint 	<p>Domination Oppression Coercion</p>	<p>Power</p>	

1.5.6.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a cornerstone method for qualitative inquiry, as it supports a nuanced, independent, and flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and narrating patterns within a dataset, as well as structuring and describing data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At its core, thematic analysis supports the interpretation and formation of themes to portray a phenomenon, which is then explicated for its broader meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I applied an inductive approach to identify themes for research question 3 starting with a semantic treatment (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Semantic analysis stays close to the respondents' responses, which offers more surface-level meanings (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Subsequent to this, I applied a latent treatment to the semantic meanings, a process that is implicit in the researcher's interpretation (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Both steps were immersed in repeated readings of the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. Codes were then developed to describe key meanings related to the research question through an iterative process after which codes were arranged in a way that connects to a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "Coding is not a precise science; it's primarily an interpretive act" (Saldana, 2009, p. 4) thus, themes were then iteratively revised and tested to ensure they were distinct and clear and labeled in a way that supported a narrative to answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As with most qualitative methods, thematic analysis is not neutral, as the researcher is directed not only by their research question but their biases and epistemological positions (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is discussed in my positionality statement in Chapter 1.7. Table 4 provides the first and second order of codes used for the data analysis to examine the motivators, enablers, and barriers for owner-managers in pursuing environmental action.

Table 4: Research Question 3 Analysis

	First Order	Second Order
Motivators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common sense - Customer initiated - Ethical - Cost savings - Future generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government rebate - Legal requirement - Spiritual - No-waste <p>Ethical Financial Legal Customer or supplier driven</p>
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Third-party - By chance - CSR efforts of customers and suppliers - Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal resources - Peer network - Self-initiated (internet) - Connecting with right partners/resources <p>External Internal</p>
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High cost - Lack of knowledge - Beholden to customer - Lack of equipment/technology - Time - Legislation - No better alternative - Resource intensive - Carbon tax - ... advancement, your technological advancement...our understanding of progressiveness, advancement, ... it means that more and more waste and more and more consumption is, it proves my point that how superior I am [and as a result] we are never satisfied - we continue to like rape the Earth of all of the resources that we are taking but can't replace - there is naturally insane amount of waste. Insane amount of packaging which could be saved. Insane amount of food which is wasted. Absolute crazy consumerism, materialism, biggest gas guzzler they need to buy. Just it boggles your mind. And North America in general is the biggest polluter on the planet. - The capitalist view is we have to keep consuming to continue to grow but, at the same time, that's unsustainable and there's no real understanding between the government and corporations - We have to simplify our lifestyle, and simplifying lifestyle means, we have to get used to a lot of discomfort, because we are so addicted to comfort - our habits of throwaway society - these massive companies basically just challenge you - We did the graphics [for PSO] it's the most wasteful organization I've come across 	<p>Capitalistic mindset Inauthenticity Government Resource constraints</p>

1.5.7 Validity, Reliability, & Replicability

“Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research” (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 199) yet it is also challenging given the rigor, subjectivity, and creativity required (Whittemore et al., 2001). Validity represents “the truthfulness of findings” whereas reliability refers to “the stability of findings”; both are benchmarks for judging the quality of a study whereby validity was initially “directly applied from reliability” (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 523).

Several strategies can be employed to ensure the study’s validity and reliability, of which I applied five of the eight recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 199). One, I use “rich, thick descriptions” and offer many perspectives both from myself via my analysis and more importantly from my participants, which includes extensive use of direct quotes rather than my interpretation of what was said. This allows for richer and more realistic results (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Two, I include negative and discrepant data, as contradictions are part of “real life”. Three, I clarified my biases by including a detailed positionality statement to foster an “open and honest narrative.” Four, I spent five months collecting this data which immersed me in this space and thus, facilitated a deeper understanding of my participants. Five, I shared my findings with others through presentations and paper development workshops, as well as engaging my committee members throughout the analysis and writing process to receive and incorporate feedback.

I continuously consulted literature throughout the entire process, which enabled me to identify areas that I wanted to address through my dissertation, including formulating my research questions and determining the most appropriate data collection and analysis methods for each research question, as well as validating my findings (Whittemore et al., 2001). For example, the SLR for research question 1 was based on well-established search protocols using reputable databases, and the deductive codes employed were also derived from credible sources (Russell Schutt & Chambliss, 2013). The research instruments for studies 2 and 3 are based on the published works of credible and reputable scholars in the domain and were vetted by my committee members and the university’s ethics committee (Russell Schutt & Chambliss, 2013). I also went through several practice runs of mock interviews with family and friends before my first participant interview to ensure questions were understood, the flow of the questions made sense, and that I was able to complete the mock interviews within the designated time (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Moreover, the data collection instrument that I used measured what the study intended to do, and many of the study’s empirical findings were later substantiated by extant literature, as well as making novel contributions.

Another dimension I considered to enhance the research's validity is making efforts to reduce bias. Social desirability bias in qualitative research describes a situation where the participant presents themselves in a way that is seen to be socially acceptable but is not fully reflective of their reality; a phenomenon that is more acute with controversial or sensitive topics (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). Given that climate change can be a controversial and/or polarizing topic for some (Wong-Parodi & Feygina, 2020), social desirability bias may have influenced the responses received, particularly the question that asked - *on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most important and 1 not important at all, how important is addressing climate change*; 88% answer with 7-8 or higher. While some participants may have given a 'socially desirable' answer, I perceived most of the participants to be open and honest rather than providing an answer that is deemed socially acceptable. For example, P#17 answered, "If it's on a recorded call and if you really want the fake answer, 10. The real answer would be zero." If social desirability was a factor, then it could be assumed that they would have just answered with 10. I believe that my friendly demeanor and approach helped elicit open and honest answers without fear of being judged. For example, I emphasized to the participants at the start of the interview, as well as during, that this research is about their perspectives and therefore, there cannot be right or wrong answers. Further, the levels of engagement that I perceived, as indicated in Chapter 1.5.5 show that 79% had medium-high passion, interest, and knowledge of sustainability issues, which largely coincides with the 91% who answered with 7-8 or higher. As such, social desirability bias is not considered to be a significant influential factor for the study.

Research replicability is another important method for enhancing both research validity and confidence in the study's outcomes (Abrahamse et al., 2015). One way to do this is by conducting similar research in other settings to test "basic ideas or findings in a different way" (Abrahamse et al., 2015, p. 66). My findings are not intended to be replicable nor can this type of study be replicable as knowledge is considered localized, not generalizable, or universalized (Mignolo, 2011b). Further, as Chapter 1.5.6 explains, the likelihood of another researcher producing the same findings is improbable because this type of qualitative study presents the researcher's reality and therefore, 'truth claims' cannot be validated against objective reality, as verifying results only serves to construct another version of truth (S. Taylor, 2001). This should not be viewed as a limitation but rather as a defining feature of the study. Further, while my analyses and findings may not be replicable, the methods that I used are (Abrahamse et al., 2015).

1.6 Ethical Considerations

After a rigorous process which included submitting the sampling and recruitment methods, and all communications to potential participants (invitation, information, consent, and thank you letters) the research was approved by the University of Waterloo's ethics committee on December 20, 2021 - #43780 – see Appendix F.

Each person who agreed to participate was given a consent letter when the interview was scheduled. At the start of the interview, I verbally reviewed the information and consent letters with the participants to make them aware of the following:

- Their participation in this study is voluntary.
- There are no risks in participating.
- Their identity will remain private, as their name or business name will not be used. However, quotes from the interview may be used in my thesis and/or publications and if used, they will be quoted with something like “Participant A” or “Participant 1”.
- They may decline to answer any of the interview questions.
- They may withdraw from this study within 7 days of the interview date by contacting me by email and once I begin the coding process, it may not be possible to remove them.

I then sought consent on the following:

- If they agreed to participate in this study? [Yes/No]
- If they agreed to have the interview audio recorded? [Yes/No]
- If they agreed to have quotes from this interview used anonymously for my thesis or any publications related to this research? [Yes/No]

They were also made aware that they could end the interview at any time and that any information they provided up to that point may be included in the study data unless they asked me not to include it. They were also given an opportunity to ask questions about the purpose and process and if they needed me to clarify anything before the interview began. After reviewing this information and receiving verbal consent, the recording began.

All the participants provided their consent. No one refused to answer any question, except one participant who chose not to disclose their age. No one withdrew from the study after the interview.

1.7 Researcher's Positionality

There is a fallacy among Western scholars that the research they produce is neutral and bias-free, which Wallerstein (1997) quantifies as an 'imperial myth'. This is not only because the researcher's biases and epistemological positions shape their research but with qualitative research, the very nature of it makes it impractical and unrealistic to do so (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher is part of the social world they are studying and therefore, cannot claim to be unbiased (Darwin Holmes, 2020). As such, it may be helpful to the reader to understand the worldviews that shape what was seen, heard, experienced, and learned by the researcher, as well as the assumptions and biases held (England, 1994). Yet at the same time, it is also important to acknowledge that this information is also interpreted by the reader's worldviews – in other words, there is no one truth or reality (S. Taylor, 2001). Worldviews are influenced by various factors such as upbringing, education, as well as political, economic, religious/spiritual, cultural, and social views, and norms (Darwin Holmes, 2020). In the following account, I describe the factors that may shape and influence my evolving worldview.

I am a woman of color, born, raised, and educated in Southwestern Ontario, Canada; proud to be a Canadian while also acknowledging Canada's dark past as a settler colony on Turtle Island. English is my native language and while I grew up with Canadian/Western traditions, values, culture, and education, I am also a child of immigrant parents from a non-Western country, which was also colonized by Britain. I was, therefore, also raised in this tradition, culture, and language.

Additionally, I have over 10 years of sustainability education all from Canadian institutions, which include courses in physical and human geography, business, political science, and philosophy. I did not learn about most of the issues discussed in my dissertation during my education pre or post-secondary, including my PhD courses. However, I was privy to many of the eurocentric and racist tropes about the non-West (many of which I took on, and internalized) in academic, professional, and social settings, including personal trips abroad.

My worldview has dramatically changed since I began my PhD, which is in part due to my experience conducting this research – e.g., literature reviews, my study's empirical findings, as well as my experience navigating the eurocentricity of academia. My research is likely to have influenced my worldview more than my worldview influenced my research. This is to say, my worldview is not static or rigid; it is dynamic and fluid, and I am open and willing to reflect on, challenge, and change my assumptions.

1.8 Researcher's Reflexivity

In the wisdom of Socrates, “a life devoid of reflective thinking is not a fully human life”; without reflection one stays “passively enmeshed in one’s thoughts” (as cited in Mortari, 2015, p. 1). A reflection practice is an integral part of the research process, particularly with qualitative research where it is also employed to legitimize and validate research methods (Mortari, 2015).

To help ensure I have balanced and accurate understandings and accounts to situate and frame my research, I consulted a broad range of academic and non-academic sources from various disciplines (e.g., history, economics, business, psychology, philosophy), mediums (books, podcasts, websites, reports, news articles, and journal articles), authors (e.g., academics, practitioners, historians, politicians, and scientists – Western and non-Western), and time periods. Additionally, I referred to sources that I believed likely to be counter to mine such as Murray (2020, p. 420) who argues:

...addition of ‘non-Western’ ideas, practices and histories to correct disciplinary Eurocentrism ... is not a solution, but a significant part of the problem ... The image of Europe as a realm of material success, scientific discovery, democracy and secular rationalism could sustain a vision of non-Westerners as benefactors of white guidance, at best, or perennial children in need of intervention at worst.

I also consulted other sources such as those rooted in critical race theory and EDI. And while I do not engage in any of these scholarships, I consulted them to understand differing perspectives, check and if need be, adjust my assumptions and biases, and also address/integrate some of these arguments and perspectives into my research. The sources I cite, as well as the examples and passages I include, have been carefully selected and ones I believe to be balanced and credible, as my intention is not to contribute to the divisiveness but rather have truthful and honest discussions.

1.9 Thesis Organization

The rest of the dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents the study for research question 1 – the implications of eurocentrism and Just Sustainabilities in business management. Chapter 3 presents the study for research question 2 – how the climate and sustainability discourses are perceived by diverse SME owner-managers, the implications for action, and the influence of spirituality in these understandings. Chapter 4 presents the study for research question 3 – the motivators, enablers, and barriers for SME owner-managers in Ontario’s manufacturing sector in pursuing environmental action. The dissertation concludes with a summary of results, research contributions, limitations, and future research avenues in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2

A systematic literature review of eurocentrism and Just Sustainabilities in business management: Implications for sustainability and corporate social responsibility

2.1 Abstract

Sustainability discourse and practice are largely based on Western values, judgment, and epistemology, heavily influencing the construction, framing, and understanding of sustainability problems and responses. Despite 50 years of various sustainability efforts, most sustainability issues continue to worsen. This study explores eurocentrism within the context of business management to better understand the implications for sustainability and corporate social responsibility. The findings illuminate the importance of problematizing eurocentrism within sustainability management which continues to promote the superiority and universality of Western knowledge and ideals that serve to exacerbate unsustainability and maintain inequities. The study highlights the need to move beyond endorsing only eurocentric approaches to sustainability and towards ones that advocate for pluriversality such as Just Sustainabilities to better promote sustainability, equality, and justice.

Keywords: eurocentrism; Just Sustainabilities; corporate social responsibility (CSR); sustainability management; pluriversality

2.2 Introduction

Western ideas of progress, modernity, and science fused during Europe's 'enlightenment', as did the illusion that humans have "mastery over nature", creating or at least deepening the nature-culture divide (Du Pisani, 2006). This mindset led to nature being viewed as a commodity and it was also when human progress became entangled with economic growth (Mignolo, 2011b). Thus, the rapacious appetite for "cheap labor and nature" intensified, bolstering both slavery and colonial expansion (Hickel, 2021). The wealth and power accumulated from these exploits were unevenly distributed creating inequalities that continue to endure and comprise today's sustainability issues (de Vries, 2013; Pal, 2018).

Despite the end of formal colonization, the West still needed access to its *cheap labor and nature* thus, colonization was repackaged as economic development, but remains "almost synonymous" with economic growth (Purvis et al., 2019). Development was peddled as both a solution and a path toward

progress and modernity that would alleviate inequities and poverty, birthing binaries such as developed/developing countries (Du Pisani, 2006). In reality, the development and modernization of the ‘developing’ world were (and still are) largely out of the self-interest of the West to maintain access to cheap labor and resources (Hickel, 2021). When it became difficult to ignore the unsustainability in the name of progress and economic development, attention shifted to sustainable development (Du Pisani, 2006). However, sustainable development, which is used interchangeably with sustainability in both academic and mainstream discourse (Purvis et al., 2019), remains rooted in the economic growth ideology, which is responsible for much of our unsustainability (Du Pisani, 2006; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022). Moreover, the Western idea of sustainability is associated with the balancing and/or integration of environmental, social, and economic pillars “without much disciplined thought about how it does and does not translate into a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability” (Thompson, 2017 as cited in Purvis et al., 2019, p. 682).

Additionally, discriminatory discourses and unsustainable practices employed during colonial rule for *cheap labor and nature* are still in effect today, particularly by business under capitalism (referred to as business hereon in) and why many firms have offshored their manufacturing to the non-West where labor and resources costs are cheaper and environmental and human rights laws are less stringent (Hickel, 2021). This not only helps to explicate why business is held responsible for many of the world’s sustainability problems but also why and how Western neocolonialism endures (Pal, 2018).

As critiques of economic growth and development began to mount in the 1960s so did the prominence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Carroll, 2015). Despite its long and speckled history that has resulted in multiple terms and interpretations, CSR can be described as a firm’s response and strategy for sustainable development where it voluntarily claims to operate within the three pillars of sustainability (Osagie et al., 2016). Yet, the greater the uptake of CSR the more business is blamed for the world’s unsustainability (Porter & Kramer, 2011), as many “green” or “eco” initiatives under the pretense of sustainable development and CSR continue to contribute to problems or create new ones (Banerjee, 2003; Du Pisani, 2006; Agyeman, 2013). However, even Porter and Kramer’s (2011) response to the shortcomings of CSR through their *shared value creation* is besieged with the same problems they claim to be solving (Karnani, 2007). This is because the mindset that created the problem is the same mindset used to solve it (Prádanos, 2013). This mindset is eurocentrism.

Eurocentrism promotes the idea that world histories, values, theories, reasoning, and standards, defined and deployed by Europeans to the rest of the world, as superior and universal truths, while stereotyping and discriminating against the non-West in overt and covert ways (Sabaratnam, 2013; Sundberg, 2014, Wijesinghe et al., 2019). This mindset was transported over by Europeans who colonized and settled in the lands known today as Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand – the countries that comprise the West, and as such, Western and European are sometimes used interchangeably. However, eurocentrism is no longer specific to geography or race, as it has knowingly and unknowingly been disseminated globally through systems such as slavery, colonization, academia, and globalization and as such, has consciously and unconsciously permeated into non-white and non-Western societies alike (Shohat & Stam, 2009). Thus, the West within the context of eurocentrism refers to the discursive West and the geopolitical powers that produce dominant and discriminatory discourses (Jammulamadaka, 2015).

The term eurocentrism may seem outdated or irrelevant for discussions outside of Europe and within a business context, particularly with the popularity of the term *decolonization* but was specifically chosen for this study not only because of the rich body of work that has been dedicated to this scholarship for over five decades but because eurocentrism is the dominant mindset that governs how the world fundamentally operates (Young, 2020).

Eurocentrism may be conflated with colonization and imperialism but they differ (Kohn & Reddy, 2017). Colonization is the *action* or *process* of settling among and/or instituting control over foreign territories and the indigenous peoples of those lands (Kohn & Reddy, 2017). Colonialism is the *policy* or *practice* of appropriating political control over another country, of which there are two categories – exploitative and settler (Young, 2020). Exploitative colonization refers to colonizers taking over the lands of others to govern and tax them (e.g., India and Indonesia) whereas settler colonization refers to colonizers and their descendants who never left the lands they occupied (e.g., the Americas) (Young, 2020). Imperialism is the *ideology* that governs how colonizers settle in the lands of others (Kohn & Reddy, 2017), which can be through religion (e.g., missionaries), as well as military, political, and economic rule that sponsors the practice of colonization and is established through various forms of power structures such as economic (e.g., nation-states and corporations), institutional (e.g., IMF, WTO, World Bank) and discursive (e.g., negative descriptors of the non-West such as ‘inferior’) (Banerjee, 2008). Eurocentrism is the *view* or *mindset* that justifies these actions and attitudes (Kohn & Reddy, 2017).

Postcolonialism or postcolonial theory is “radical *critiques* of colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism” (Banerjee & Prasad, 2008, p. 91). Neocolonialism refers to ongoing colonialism mainly through economic, political, and military control, interference, and subjugation (Wijesinghe et al., 2019). Postcolonialism seeks to reject Western superiority and challenge mindsets and values (Young, 2020) and is often used to situate and understand contemporaneous issues in ‘developing’ countries through the lens of colonialism (Banerjee & Prasad, 2008). Many of the intellectuals who contributed to and shaped postcolonialism scholarship (e.g., Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak) focused on exploitative colonialism, largely excluding settler colonialism (Young, 2020). However, former colonies have their own specific and different colonial experiences and histories, particularly as there were multiple European colonizers; therefore, colonial experiences should not be theorized or generalized (Mignolo, 2011b; Young, 2020).

This then led to the emergence of decoloniality, which is not a theory but rather *localized forms of critical thinking*, underpinned by the maxim ‘decolonizing the mind’ coined by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o to emphasize the need for people to begin decolonizing their own cultures (Banerjee & Prasad, 2008; Young, 2020). Pluriversality can be described as an approach to decoloniality that challenges Western epistemology and hermeneutics, which not only serve as gatekeepers but prevent other ways of knowing, thinking, and doing (Mignolo, 2018).

Contemporary characterizations of decolonization are *movements* that shift beyond speaking of issues of past inequities and towards a resituating of “almost every aspect of [present-day] life” outside of Western thought – institutionally, politically, culturally, and socially, making the scope tremendously broad (Young, 2020, p. 39). Examples of decolonization movements include the toppling or removal of monuments, and the critiquing and demanding of banning art, music, movies, and literature (Young, 2020). This suggests that decolonization as a movement is not only distinct from decoloniality but can be counter to it, as pluriversality does not seek to reject or suppress viewpoints.

While Europeans were not the only colonizers, for instance, the Mongols and Ottomans also exploited people throughout their violent conquests, greater attention is placed on European colonialism because it differs from other colonial projects (Skolimowski, 1974; Pal, 2018). Apart from its global reach, there are at least four reasons why European colonization and thus, eurocentrism need to be part of today’s sustainability discourse.

First, the impacts of Western colonization are part of today's sustainability problems; the effects of which are still felt by millions globally in present-day (Pal, 2018). As one example, before the British government took reign of India, the East India Company, a private corporation, violently ruled the region, enforcing "ruinous taxation, to carry out officially sanctioned looting" (the word loot is derived from the Hindi word *lutna*, to plunder) of India's wealth for the sole purpose of profit, which allowed shareholders to amass large personal fortunes (Dalrymple, 2015). This was done without concern for just governance as it pillaged, tortured, killed, and enslaved people while Britain secured its wealth and global dominance, which it continues to benefit from today (Dalrymple, 2015). Before the arrival of the British, India was flourishing despite being under Mughal rule for over a century (Mukerjee, 2010; Sen, 2021), generating 22.5% of the world's GDP whereas Britain was producing 1.8%, but as Dalrymple (2020) explains "By the peak of the Raj, those figures had more or less been reversed: India was reduced from the world's leading manufacturing nation to a symbol of famine and deprivation."

Second, there is an illusion that the West's historical and current wealth and advancement are self-generated rather than recognizing they were largely achieved by the exploitation of the non-West, as the above example describes, creating unequal socioeconomic and political hierarchies and systems that endure (Shohat & Stam, 2009). As a result, the West controls and narrates its version of history which omits the West's leading role in the plight of the 'developing' world (Shohat & Stam, 2009). This involves viewing the non-West as charity, incapable of helping themselves, in need of saving, and speaking on behalf of, ostensibly by the West rather than recognizing that these issues are rooted in systemic inequalities created by the West (Jackson, 2005; Brodie, 2007; Haluza-DeLay et al., 2009). Furthermore, many colonizing countries do not teach their colonial past, at least not with accuracy; rather colonizers portray themselves with a "sense of exceptionalism" and as "humanitarian superpowers" (Hennessey, 2022, p. 2), which are tightly rooted in individualism and saviorism (Straubhaar, 2015).

Third, Western colonization still endures (Pal, 2018), particularly through academia, globalization, and neoliberalism (Shohat & Stam, 2009). Multinational corporations (MNCs) continue to hold the role of what colonial powers did during formal colonial rule - exploit people and nature for self-serving goals, in which they evade the responsibility for the nefarious impacts they create (Maak, 2009; Adams et al., 2018).

The fourth reason why eurocentrism is relevant to sustainability discourse and practice is that it shapes and controls how sustainable development, sustainability (Banerjee, 2003; 2011), and CSR (Lund-Thomsen, 2004; Bergman et al., 2015) discourses are created, shaped, and perpetuated.

The global dissemination of eurocentrism, which Wijesinghe et al. (2019, p. 179) argue is now “primarily about the domination of intellect and culture” has led to the rest of the world either knowingly or unknowingly adopting eurocentric ideologies and values as ‘normal’. Intellectual colonization has also led to an internalized inferiority (Karodia & Soni, 2014; Ojha & Venkateswaran, 2022), which has resulted in some non-Western peoples believing Western knowledge, education, culture, and values are superior to their own (Subramani & Kempner, 2002). Thus, eurocentrism embodies issues of attitudes, culture, power, and class (Shohat & Stam, 2009).

This chronicling illuminates the importance of examining sustainability and CSR within the context of eurocentrism, as it enables us “to construct a history of the present and our attitude toward the future” (Banerjee, 2003, p.148). However, as this study is a systematic literature review (SLR), it is important to highlight that academia, where much of the literature is produced, has created and perpetuated these narratives (Wallerstein, 1997; Naidoo, 2003; Wijesinghe et al., 2019). Western perspectives are applied to understand non-Western cultures and societies, which often produce simplistic and inaccurate views and theories rather than offering nuanced analyses (Ojha & Venkateswaran, 2022). Non-Western scholars can also be disenfranchised, as they are often expected and forced to accept a narrative whether they agree or not, including ones about their own countries if they want to achieve academic success (Wijesinghe et al., 2019), and are often obliged to compromise and shape their research based on Western ideologies (Naidoo, 2003).

Further, Western approaches to research encourage generalizing and theorizing phenomena whereby knowledge created in one setting or group is applied to others, resulting in misleading or inaccurate accounts (Sabaratnam, 2013). Knowledge is created by individuals who are influenced by their localized contexts, geographies, and worldviews; therefore, knowledge must be understood as localized, signaling the need for a plurality of perspectives (Mignolo, 2018). However, it is not just about gaining and incorporating a plurality of perspectives, but approaching knowledge beyond the superiority and universality of Western epistemology and hermeneutics, what is known as pluriversality (Mignolo, 2018), which acknowledges that there are multiple ways of thinking,

knowing, and doing (Escobar, 2018a) and thus, does not seek to reject or suppress Western or eurocentric perspectives (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Just Sustainabilities (JS) is one approach to pluriversality as it connects issues of social justice (i.e., race, gender, class) to the environment through a plurality of perspectives (Agyeman et al., 2016). JS does not strive to provide a theoretically or geographically conclusive or comprehensive framework, as context matters and thus, cannot be theorized or generalized (Agyeman et al., 2003). JS is premised on the idea that there are multiple ways to see and experience a problem, as well as multiple ways to address it and rarely is there a panacea solution (Agyeman et al., 2016).

Originally coined *Just Sustainability*, Agyeman and colleagues (2003) developed JS to advance the idea that sustainability should be pursued by prioritizing justice and equality without diminishing the importance of the environment (Ahmed & Meenar, 2018). It advocates that human rights, equity, inclusivity, and justice need to be part of each society's core foundation (Agyeman et al., 2016) because without addressing social injustices it is difficult, if not impossible to address any other kind of injustice (Feygina, 2013; Schlosberg & Collins, 2014; Fisher, 2015). In other words, it is unlikely that sustainability can be achieved without addressing the vast injustices that fall under social justice. JS does not promote hierarchical modes of organizing nor does it advocate for a singular conception, but rather it strives to be pluralist in its efforts, approaches, and concepts, resonating with a broad range of constituents hence, the pluralized *Just Sustainabilities* (Agyeman et al., 2016).

No known study has explored eurocentrism and JS within the context of business management, thus enabling us to understand how they connect to and inform one another. Through a systematic review of these scholarships, this study aims to understand eurocentrism and JS and their implications for sustainability and CSR by exploring (1) what characterizations of eurocentrism and Just Sustainabilities are presented in business management literature; (2) who is creating and contributing to these discourses; (3) where these scholarships intersect and diverge; and (4) how are they relevant to the field of business management and CSR.

2.3 Methods

This conceptual paper presents the results of a narrative synthesis, a type of SLR (Popay et al., 2006), to understand eurocentrism (EUR) and JS within the context of business management. The study creates new knowledge through methodically curated sources of information based on a set of norms (Jaakkola, 2020). The study also creates novel arguments as a result of integrating data points and

embracing new relationships from extant concepts and theories to offer original arguments rather than empirically testing them (Hirschheim, 2008; Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). A narrative synthesis is ideal for subjects that have been conceptualized in different ways and examined by different researchers within different disciplines and allows for the exploration of how a field has evolved across research traditions to understand complex topics (Snyder, 2019), as in the case of EUR and JS. The remainder of this section describes the searching, screening, and coding methods employed.

2.3.1 Search Protocol

The search protocol was guided by the study’s four research questions, divided into two thematic streams: EUR and JS, and paired with synonyms for business – see Table 5. JS emerged from urban planning and food security disciplines and therefore, may not be known or used by scholars in other domains even though they may be referring to similar ideas espoused by JS. For this reason, the JS string includes the terms *environmental and social justice*.

The inclusion criteria are online articles (empirical, conceptual, commentary, reviews, and editorials) published in English after 1999. No limitations were placed on the paper’s discipline, industry, geography, or unit of analysis, as the research is also looking at who is contributing to these scholarships, including which disciplines they originate from. The search was conducted using the article’s title, keywords, and abstract.

Scopus and ProQuest were selected as they are considered reputable and comprehensive databases for research and business journals; they span over 50 years of coverage; are used frequently in SLRs (Elsevier, n.d.; ProQuest, n.d.; Siemieniako et al., 2021); and have a focus on business management (Haffar & Searcy, 2017). One important caveat is that non-Western perspectives and articles, while they exist, may be omitted from Scopus and ProQuest due to the eurocentricity of academia described in the Introduction, as well as the English-language criteria used.

Table 5: Search Protocol

Theme	Search String
EUR	eurocentr* AND (business* OR corporat* OR firm* OR compan * OR enterprise*)
JS	(“just sustain*” OR “sustainab* justice” OR (“environment* justice” AND “social justice”) OR “environment* and social justice” OR “social and environment* justice”) AND (business* OR corporat* OR firm* OR compan* OR enterprise*)

2.3.2 Screening Process

Based on the search strings presented in Table 5, the initial search yielded 448 articles. After removing duplicates, the results narrowed to 378. Using keywords, titles, and abstracts, the 378 articles were screened to ensure they were about business. This process eliminated another 295 articles. The next step was accessing the remaining 83 articles. Four of them could not be accessed, which left 79 for the first reading. The first reading of the full paper eliminated 41 papers due to lack of fit. The second reading involved coding the 38 remaining papers for a business function, eliminating four more papers that could not be coded due to lack of fit. This left 34 articles for the final phase of inductive coding. The screening process is summarized in Figure 2 and the results are presented in Table 6.

Figure 2: Screening Results

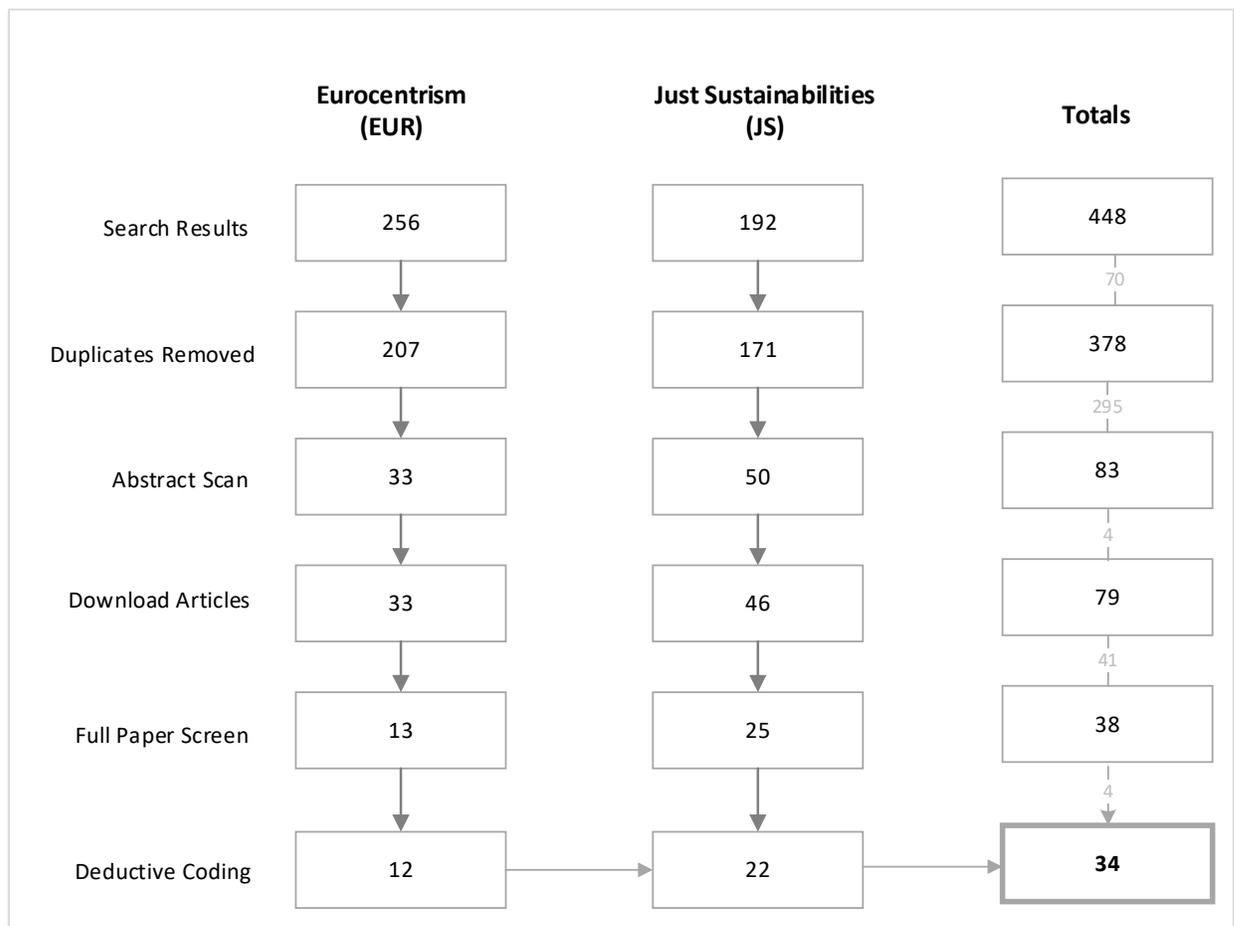


Table 6: SLR Results

First Author	Paper Title	Year	Theme
Adams, Kweku	Critical perspectives on “manufactured” risks arising from Eurocentric business practices in Africa	2018	EUR
Affolderbach, Julia	“Just” ecopreneurs: Re-conceptualising green transitions and entrepreneurship	2017	JS
Allen, John	Green entrepreneurship: A method for managing natural resources?	2008	JS
Awatere, Shaun	Whakatipu rawa ma ngā uri whakatipu: Optimising the “Māori” in Māori economic development	2017	JS
Bergman, Manfred	An analysis of the conceptual landscape of corporate responsibility in academia	2015	EUR
Brady, Miranda	Wind power! Marketing renewable energy on tribal lands and the struggle for Just Sustainability	2012	JS
De Silva, Dakshina	Entry and exit patterns of “toxic” firms	2016	JS
Demssie, Yared	Think outside the European box: Identifying sustainability competencies for a base of the pyramid context	2019	EUR
Drebes, Maike	Impediments to the implementation of voluntary codes of conduct in production factories of the Global South: So much to do, so little done	2014	EUR
Essers, Caroline	Upsetting ‘Others’ in the Netherlands: Narratives of Muslim Turkish migrant businesswomen at the crossroads of ethnicity, gender and religion	2014	EUR
Gibson-Graham, Katherine	Roepke Lecture in economic geography—economic geography, manufacturing, and ethical action in the Anthropocene	2019	JS
Giuliani, Elisa	Piketty, Thunberg, or Marx? Shifting ideologies in the COVID-19 bailout conditionality debate	2020	JS
Gloet, Marianne	Knowledge management and the links to HRM: Developing leadership and management capabilities to support sustainability	2006	JS
Hall, Matthew	Criminal redress in cases of environmental victimization: A defence	2017	JS
Hemais, Marcus	Understanding the Brazilian consumerism movement from a decolonial perspective: The case of Proteste	2021	EUR
Kalnins, Arturs	Community characteristics and changes in toxic chemical releases: Does information disclosure affect environmental injustice?	2017	JS
Karlsson, Mariko	Selling women the green dream: The paradox of feminism and sustainability in fashion marketing	2020	JS
Karodia, Anis	South African MBA’s must focus on development issues not business and finance only and must redefine the dominance of the Eurocentric approach	2014	EUR
Komlosy, Andrea	Entanglements of catching-up: Rethinking ‘industrial revolution’ from a global perspective	2021	EUR
Logsdon, Jeanne	Justice and large corporations: What do activist shareholders want?	2008	JS
Lund-Thomsen, Peter	Towards a critical framework on corporate social and environmental responsibility in the South: The case of Pakistan	2004	JS
Maak, Thomas	The cosmopolitical corporation	2009	JS
Martin, Judy	Reconsidering intercultural (communication) competence in the workplace: A dialectical approach	2015	EUR
Mather, Charles	Is social licence “going rogue”?	2019	JS
McCrorry, Martin	Cutting out the middle-man: The case for direct business involvement in environmental justice	2012	JS
Nayak, Bhabani	Eurocentric characterization of risk in international business	2018	EUR
Pellow, David	Environmental inequality formation: Toward a theory of environmental injustice	2000	JS
Quan, Yuan	Environmental justice in warehousing location	2018	JS
Ramirez, Jacobo	Contentious dynamics within the social turbulence of environmental (In)justice Surrounding Wind Energy Farms in Oaxaca, Mexico	2021	JS
Sharma, Gagan	Pathways for advancing the scholarship on transformation towards a sustainable and equitable community	2021	EUR
Simon, David	Corporate environmental crimes and social inequality: New directions for environmental justice research	2000	JS
Vardeman-Winter, Jennifer	Still a lily-white field of women: The state of workforce diversity in public relations practice and research	2017	EUR
Vasudevan, Pavithra	An intimate inventory of race and waste	2021	JS
Zoller, Heather	Women’s health activism targeting corporate health risks: Women’s voices for the Earth	2016	JS

2.3.3 Data Analysis and Coding

The 34 articles were imported into NVivo software where the papers were manually coded and analyzed. To answer the first research question - *What characterizations are presented in literature*, the first set of codes categorizes papers based on the search theme, the paper type, as well as the definition type (Table 7).

Table 7: Paper Characteristics

	Codes
Theme	EUR; JS
Paper type	Empirical, conceptual, review/commentary (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015)
Definition	Explicit-P: explicitly defines the term using a primary source Explicit-S: explicitly defines the term using secondary sources Implicit-P: term defined through context or examples using a primary source Implicit-S: term defined through context or examples using secondary sources Undefined: the paper offers no explicit or implicit definition.

To answer the questions, *Who is creating and contributing to these scholarships* and *How are they relevant to the field of business management and CSR*, three more sets of deductive codes were established. The second set of codes (Table 8) was used for performing deductive coding during the second reading to ensure the articles were suitable for the study. The codes are based on Flynn's (2019) and Hunger and Wheelen's (2011) classifications with two additional codes: business schools and CSR. Business schools are relevant to this study because they groom business professionals for the workplace (Karodia & Soni, 2014). CSR was included because the way a business conducts itself and the environmental and socio-economic impacts it creates are taken into consideration for evaluating financial value and performance thus, many businesses have a CSR department and/or consider this as a functional area (Patara & Dhalla, 2022). The analysis revealed that many of the articles could have been coded under several business functions (e.g., green entrepreneurship could go under CSR, entrepreneurship, operations, or strategy) and while the articles were only coded for the most dominant business function, the analysis considered all applicable business functions.

Table 8: Business Functions

Code	Examples
Business Schools	business schools directly related to business or a business function
CSR	sustainability, ethics, justice
Entrepreneurship	entrepreneurship/small business
Finance	banking, insurance, accounting, taxation, auditing
HR	organizational behavior, workplace health/wellness, recruitment, employee engagement
Intl. Business	international business and studies/development, global relations
IT	technology or computer-related
Marketing	marketing, sales, branding, public relations, communications
Operations	production, manufacturing, procurement, supply chain, facilities, transportation, logistics
R&D	innovation, business development
Strategy	strategy, management, consulting, change management, governance

The third set of codes (Table 9) is for the first author’s and journal’s discipline to help understand which field the articles emerged from. These codes and the examples were adapted from Taylor & Francis (n.d.) and Routledge Taylor & Francis Group (n.d.). Given the study’s focus, the codes were modified to distinguish business, environment, and international studies from their parent discipline under the social sciences. Additionally, science and technology were combined with engineering and math to form the commonly used STEM acronym.

Table 9: First Author and Journal Discipline

Code	Examples
Business	economics, marketing, accounting, HR, finance, tourism, hospitality
Environment	physical, built, social, sustainability, rural, regional, planning
International Studies	international business and relations
Health Sciences	healthcare, medicine, dentistry
Humanities	history, philosophy, music, art, theatre, languages, literature
Social Sciences (other)	sociology, psychology, political science, anthropology, law, communications
STEM	sciences, technology, engineering, math

The fourth set of codes (Table 10) was developed to understand who is contributing to these scholarships, which include the first author’s discipline, education degree and location, and institution type and location. Coding was only conducted for the first author as they are generally “the person who made the most significant intellectual contribution to the work [including] designing the study, acquiring and analyzing data from experiments and writing the actual manuscript” (Elsevier, n.d.-b).

Table 10: First Author Codes

Code	Attributes
Institution location Education location	Based on the M49 standard created by the United Nations (1999) the following codes were used: Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Caribbean (LAC), Northern America (N.A.), Oceania and GMU (global, multiple, or unspecified). LAC and N.A. are used instead of Americas. Mexico is classified under LAC and it is considered part of the non-West.
First author education	PhD, PhD student, JD, Master, Bachelor
Institution type	academia, private sector, public sector, entrepreneur, student, unknown/other

To answer where EUR and JS intersect and diverge, inductive coding was applied using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the most popular techniques for SLRs (Snyder, 2019), as it supports an independent and flexible method for searching, analyzing, and reporting patterns within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each paper was systematically analyzed and coded to identify patterns and themes based on the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Data were coded by establishing and applying the appropriate descriptors, and then piecing together fragmented data and ideas through an iterative process (Saldana, 2009).

2.4 Findings

The Findings are organized by the study's four research questions: discourse characterizations, scholarship contributors, intersections and variances, and relevance to business management and CSR.

2.4.1 Discourse Characterizations

Of the 34 articles, 65% originated from the JS search stream and 35% from EUR. All the papers were analyzed to see if definitions of EUR and JS were provided and if they were explicitly defined or implicitly (using examples or stories where the definition is inferred but not defined). The purpose of coding for this distinction is that key terms and concepts are typically defined if they are not common knowledge or have multiple meanings. This coding helps to understand whether the authors believed definitions were required or if they could be inferred. The analysis also included whether the definitions were developed by the authors (primary) or if another author's definition was used (secondary).

Only one paper provided an explicit primary definition, 29% were explicit secondary explanations, 9% were implicit primary characterizations, 15% were implicit secondary descriptions, and 44% of papers did not provide any definition – see Figure 3. Additionally, 70.6% of the papers were conceptual, 17.6% were reviews and editorials, and 11.8% were empirical – see Figure 4.

Figure 3: Definitions

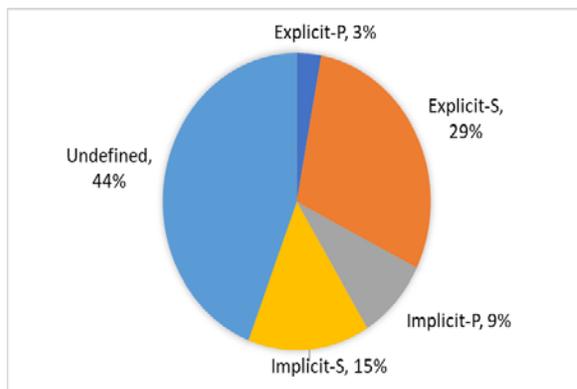
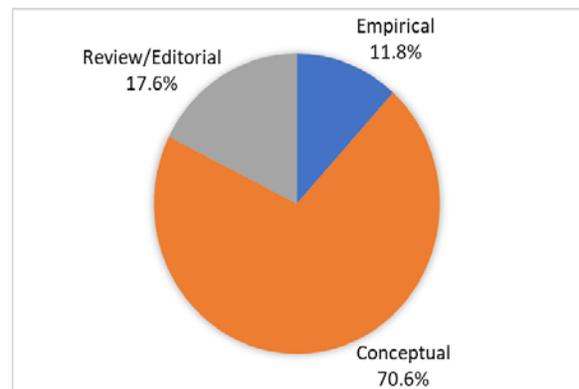


Figure 4: Paper Type



2.4.1.1 Eurocentrism

Of the 12 papers in the EUR stream, none of them explicitly defined eurocentrism. A few of the papers were captured in the SLR because they use a derivative of eurocentrism (e.g., eurocentric) as a descriptor or adjective but give no context or explanation of what they mean by the term. The rest of the articles described avatars of eurocentrism through examples and narrative-telling and within these articles, four features of eurocentrism emerged: superiority, oppression and domination, modernity, and universality.

2.4.1.1.1 Superiority

Drebes (2014, p. 262) is one of the few papers that more fully describes what is meant by eurocentrism through a narrative that highlights superiority:

Eurocentrism often seeks to demonstrate the superiority of European or Western customs, ideas, perceptions and normative understandings to analogous developments in other cultures. Europe is placed at the historical and social centre of the world's characterize and modernity and Western knowledge is 'true', whereas Southern knowledge is 'naïve'. While the former has become generally accepted, is often seen as a genuine, unquestioned view of the world, the latter is seen as

subjective, often even childlike and unrealistic. Eurocentrism therefore describes the way that Europe is regarded as dominant subject and the non-European world of the global South as suppressed object, the 'Other'— a fundamental differentiation which has characterized the world's order for a long time and is still doing so to a large degree.

Additionally, Komlosy (2021) defines orientalism, a term coined by Edward Said that speaks to eurocentrism and helps explicate superiority:

...an attitude assigning deficiencies to peoples or polities who do not correspond to the Western model of modernization. They are declared to be the 'other', thus contributing to the re-assertion of the Western self-perception as being superior, legitimizing foreign intervention, rule or domination. Speaking from a position of presumptuousness about others, supposedly less developed, less civilized people ('savages', 'barbarians', 'natives') is a common phenomenon in history. It got a new facet, when in the nineteenth century civilizations, which until then had enjoyed high esteem and admiration by Western observers (Arab, Muslim, Chinese, and Confucian ...), were portrayed and labelled as despotic, traditional, not capable to modernize from within. The term 'orientalization', initially used to describe the Western making of the Arab and Muslim world's deficiencies, lost its regional connotation and became a general term, used to characterize similar processes defaming non-Western societies to be inferior while confirming the West's superiority.

2.4.1.1.2 Oppression & Domination

Oppression and domination are explicated by pejorative and judgmental stereotypes such as the non-West being less civilized and developed, and thus, lacking the capabilities to progress (Drebes, 2014; Essers & Tedmanson, 2014; Hemais and Santos, 2021; Komlosy; 2021). Oppression and domination are also subsumed through the exclusion of the non-West in history, markets (Adams et al., 2018; Komlosy, 2021), research (Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2017; Demssie et al., 2019), meetings and school programs (Karodia & Soni, 2014). Further, Rodney (1974 cited in Karodia & Soni, 2014 p. 11) shares:

underdevelopment is very much tied to the fact that human social development has been uneven, and from a strictly economic viewpoint some human groups have advanced further by producing more and becoming wealthy and, by the processes of exploitation of indigenous people.

Additionally, Christianity, which is foundational to eurocentrism and its dissemination, was mentioned in three of the EUR articles. For example, Bergman et al. (2015, p. 184) write Western cultural values are largely based on Christian theology and as a result “This Eurocentrism precludes

concrete and applicable, context-specific recommendations, while rehearsing, if not imposing, norms and values, which have their roots in the specificities of Western ideologies.”

2.4.1.1.3 Modernity

Modernity is described by Hemais and Santos (2021, p.316) as “the promise used by Eurocentric peoples to lift backward-seeming societies from the provincial state of immaturity natural to the” non-Western world, advanced through capitalism, which the authors argue has “only” contributed to the non-West’s “problems and dependency”. Komlosy (2021) states that modernity comes from the idea that the West is advanced, sophisticated, and competitive, while the non-West requires “catching up”, which is done so by emulating Western achievements, a “permanent and revolving” endeavor. Further, Komlosy (2021, p. 91) argues that modernity was pursued through “civilizing missions” to bring the non-West to modernity, which was legitimized by:

transforming ‘backward’ regions into places for the extraction of goods and values, as well as for the West to confirm the feeling of superiority [but] at the core of any concept of modernization and catching-up was the perception of a deficit, a lack, a deficiency or blockage of ... internal capacities for modernization, a blockage due to geographical, human and institutional factors.

2.4.1.1.4 Universality

Hemais and Santos (2021, p.317) describe universality as:

...Eurocentric knowledge [that] has been expanded globally as if it were universal, thus, liable to explain all global phenomena (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006). However, knowledge, in truth, cannot be universalized, since it is a concept created by man, who is influenced by his location, which shapes the way he sees the world (Mignolo 2009).

Universality surfaces in several ways, which will be discussed throughout the paper. For example, when it comes to gender issues (also see Section 2.4.3.3) Essers and Tedmanson (2014, p.354) write:

Postcolonial feminists criticize Western feminists for generalizing women’s issues, for example using ‘woman’ as a universal term centred primarily on Western women’s experience, all but erasing the importance of the influences of social class and ethnic identities (Narayan, 1998; Narayan and Harding, 1998).

2.4.1.2 Just Sustainabilities

JS was born out of environmental justice, a discourse that examines how certain groups (often PoC and low-income peoples and countries) are disproportionately exposed to environmental burdens

(Lund-Thomsen, 2004). The historical roots of environmental justice originate from a 1987 project to examine the unequal distribution of hazardous landfills in poorer and minority neighborhoods in the US (Quan, 2018). For this reason, and as explained in the Methods section, the words *environmental and social justice* were captured in the JS search string. All papers whether they explicitly use *Just Sustainabilities* or not, are referred to as JS papers.

Of the 22 papers in the JS stream, over half (12) do not provide any definition (including environmental or social justice). Six articles define environmental justice, which Pellow (2000, p. 582) explains is about solving the problem of environmental racism – the “disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on communities of color.” The lack of definition is a notable point, as Pellow (2000, p. 581) points out:

Most scholars who use the terms environmental justice or environmental racism do so with little attention to how to define these concepts, and they often use them interchangeably. Even fewer scholars use or properly define terms like environmental injustice and environmental inequality.

McCrory and Langvardt (2012, p. 361) refer to *sustainable justice*:

Sustainable justice requires a broader perspective than that taken traditionally by environmentalists and the government. It requires respect for the land, but also a more demonstrable respect for the people living upon the land. It requires an approach that intertwines social justice with economics and the environment to create sustainable communities. It requires business to simultaneously recognize the scope and magnitude of the problems, while focusing more narrowly within discrete geographic areas (those disproportionately affected). It requires business to recognize that every step toward building clean and sustainable communities is a good step. Finally, it also requires business to eliminate the top- to-bottom trickle-down approach associated with ‘old-school’ environmental thinking.

Three papers specifically used the terms *Just Sustainability* or *Just Sustainabilities*, which were explicitly defined using secondary sources. JS was created in the early 2000s by Julian Agyeman, Robert Bullard, and Bob Evans who define JS as the “need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems” (Agyeman et al., 2003, p. 5 as cited in Gibson-Graham et al., 2019, p. 9). Affolderbach and Krueger (2017) explain the emergence of JS is because the environmental justice discourse lacks attention to sociopolitical and economic context and social justice lacks attention to the environmental dimensions. Brady and Monani (2012, p. 151-152) state that JS advocates for:

... a ‘new economics’ that [does] not measure monetary gain as foremost but also puts an equal premium on the quality of life and ecosystem health, ‘now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner’ (Agyeman et al. 2003, p. 5; also referenced in Agyeman 2005). ... Just Sustainability is both a theoretical and pragmatic framework that argues for a balance of bottom-up grass-roots participation with top-down ecological advice to build not simply economic but also social justice and environmental capital in the long-term.

2.4.2 Scholarship Contributors

All the first authors hold a PhD or are pursuing one. The education location of 91% of the first authors is from a Western country; the 9% who did not receive their education from a Western institution are all in the EUR stream. For both streams, all first authors work in academia except for two. Across both streams, 91% of the first authors’ disciplines are in the social sciences (47% in business, 24% in other social sciences, and 16% in environment); the remaining 9% are in the humanities – see Table 11.

Table 11: First Author’s Education and Location

Discipline	Education	Education Locale	Institution-Type	Institution Locale
Business	47%	PhD 94%	N. A. 47%	Academia 91%
Other SS*	24%	Student 3%	Europe 38%	Student 3%
Environment	21%	PhD & JD 3%	Oceania 6%	Other 3%
Humanities	9%		Asia 3%	Public 3%
STEM	0%		Africa 3%	Private 0%
Health	0%		LAC 3%	Entrepreneur 0%
Int’l Studies	0%			N/A 3%

*social sciences

2.4.3 Intersections & Variances

This section explores where the EUR and JS articles overlap and diverge and are organized by six themes that emerged.

2.4.3.1 Scale

The central distinguishing feature found between the two streams is the scales at which they operate. The JS articles mostly examine issues in the US and at community scales, however, JS is gaining

traction in studies at global scales (e.g., Gibson-Graham et al., 2019; Ramirez, 2019). Except for one article, all EUR articles are on a global scale and focus on MNCs.

2.4.3.2 Oppression & Domination

An unsurprising theme that both constructs share is oppression, espoused by superiority and domination imposed by the dominant group onto non-dominant groups (often PoC and low-income peoples and countries) yet, there are variances in this as well.

In the EUR articles, oppression is observable by the West/non-West dichotomy and negative characterizations of the non-West (Drebes, 2014; Essers & Tedmanson, 2014; Karodia & Soni, 2014; Komlosy, 2021). Oppression includes viewing the non-West as in need of ‘catching up’ and ‘modernizing’, which ostensibly requires Western dependence (discussed further in Section 2.4.4.3) and therefore, is seen as another form of oppression (Hemais et al., 2021; Komlosy, 2021).

Within the JS articles, oppression is discussed at both community and global scales. From a global perspective, the West/non-West framing is evident and manifests in a variety of ways, such as the savior complex whereupon the non-West needs saving by white/Western people (Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020). It is also evidenced by the strategic decisions of Western businesses to operate in countries with lax or poorly enforced environmental and human rights regulations (Giuliani, 2020). On community and regional scales, the West/non-West dichotomy is not perceptible. Rather oppression and domination are expressed by the disproportionate environmental burdens (such as toxic industries and waste sites) prevalent in low-income neighborhoods, which are predominately inhabited by PoC (De Silva et al., 2016; Kalnins & Dowell, 2017).

2.4.3.3 Feminist Dichotomy

Feminism is also an intersecting theme between the two constructs but also with varying perspectives. In two EUR articles, the authors discuss the contrast between white Western women and non-Western women. For example, Vardeman-Winter and Place (2017) argue that scholarly attention on diversity has traditionally and largely been through a eurocentric lens that has not only ignored systemic racism but that diversity research has mostly focused on gender, specifically on white women. Essers and Tedmanson (2014, p. 364) also assert that the “liberal white feminist paradigm has dominated organizational research and privileged Western women’s experiences” whereas the perspectives of

women of color (living in the West or non-West) are often written by or referenced through white women's experiences.

In a JS article, Karlsson and Ramasar (2020, p. 338) found in their study that women of color, particularly those living in the non-West are presented as “vulnerable and in need of sympathy” while white women are presented as “responsible and virtuous” and “powerful and empowered” imbued with the white savior complex.

2.4.3.4 Economic Growth as a Measure of Success

Another intersecting theme is the measurement of success through economic growth. In EUR articles, Adams et al. (2018), Nayak (2018), and Hemais and Santos (2021) explain that measuring success purely by economic growth is eurocentric. This is because one of the most significant ways the West maintains its hegemony is by measuring progress based on capitalistic principles that are determined by Western terms and judgments (Hemais & Santos, 2021) so that “everything is measured in terms of economic growth” (Nayak, 2018, p. 166).

Similarly, JS calls for a “new economics” where monetary value is not the vanguard for quality of life or success because “after a certain amount, more money (standard of living) does not mean more happiness (quality of life)” (Agyeman, 2005 as cited in Brady & Monani, 2012, p. 151). Furthermore, success is assessed on the accumulation of material wealth and consumption, which has high environmental and social costs that burden marginalized groups the most (Brady & Monani, 2012). Similarly, Awatere et al. (2017) also advocate that there is a need for businesses to move beyond the ethos of profit maximization and towards positive communal outcomes that maximize social well-being and reduce adverse impacts on the environment.

2.4.3.5 Culture & Spirituality

Another key area where the two constructs have an overlapping theme is culture and spirituality (or the lack of). For example, in a EUR article, Adams et al. (2018, p. 212) note that many “business transaction[s] in the African context” are often bastioned by the Ubuntu philosophy that advocates for communalism and human kindness, which they suggest is “in direct opposition” to the Western maxim of doing business.

In a JS article, participants in Ramirez's (2019, p. 397) study in Mexico presented a strong association with *Mother Earth* and “spiritual and social ties”, which the participants argue are concepts that the

capitalist model fails to grasp. Mother Earth is a shared expression and understanding in many parts of the world that conveys the interdependency that exists among nature, humans, and non-human beings (Ramirez, 2019). From a kaupapa Māori perspective, “values and principles like utu (reciprocity), manaakitanga (an ethic of generosity) and kaitiakitanga (sustainable resource management)... whanaungatanga (community connectedness)” are the core of business and planning decisions (Awatere et al., 2017). McCrory and Langvardt (2012, p. 360) also remarked that the “simplicity and spirituality of the natural world” are rejected by capitalistic societies.

2.4.3.6 Individualism

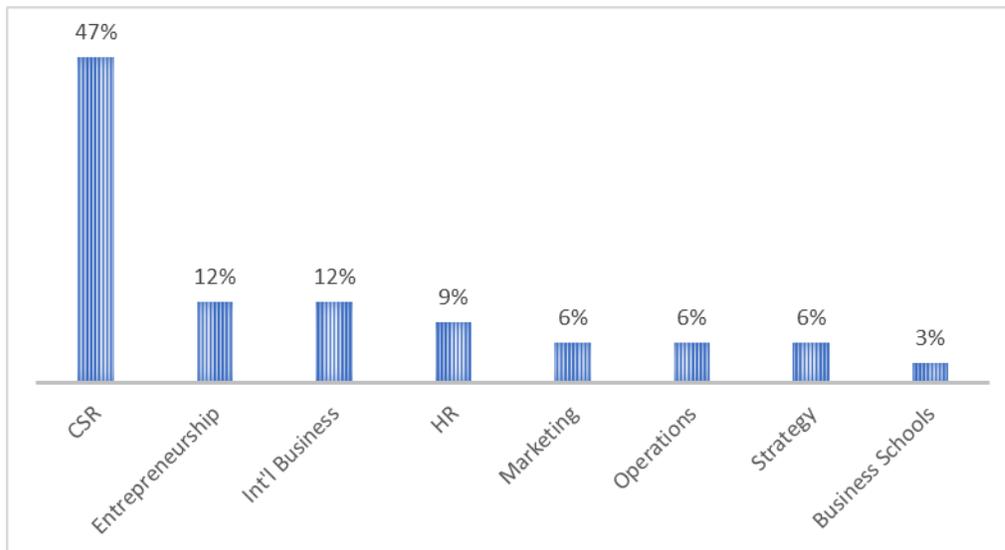
Individualism (e.g., corporate self-interest) is another intersecting feature. In EUR articles, Maak (2009), Karodia and Soni (2014), and Adams et al. (2018) explain how colonizers brought over their policies and agendas to exploit peoples and resources out of self-interest and profit maximization, which are characteristics of individualism (Maak, 2009). Individualism is also evident from a CSR perspective where Drebes (2014) argues that businesses often seek to take action if it benefits them; if the action helps to alleviate inequities it is “coincidental.” Bergman et al. (2015, p. 183) also found that Western companies have a strong emphasis on “sociocultural individualism.”

Similarly in the JS stream, the dominant group creates inequities for self-serving reasons such as disposing of waste or establishing polluting industries in poorer regions (Lund-Thomsen, 2004; Maak, 2009; De Silva et al., 2016; Kalnins & Dowell, 2017). Simon (2000, p. 644) argues that “America’s social structure involves institutional dominance by business institutions and cultural values that emphasize individualism, achievement, competition, and the fetishism of money.” Further, Hall (2017, p. 205) argues that environmental and social harm serve the “interest of corporate entities and the economic goals of the state.”

2.4.4 Relevance to Business Management and CSR

To help answer the question of how EUR and JS scholarships are relevant to business management and CSR, each article was coded for the core business functional area (as defined in Table 8) discussed in the paper. This is to help offer more nuanced accounts of how these issues surface in business (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Papers by Business Function



2.4.4.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

The CSR code was applied to papers where the main thesis was on sustainability, CSR, or ethics; 47% of the papers received this coding.

The most prominent idea that emerged from these articles is encapsulated by Bergman et al. (2015, p. 183) who remark that CSR “challenges and solutions are often framed in a eurocentric approach.” Their study found that Western businesses tend to approach CSR in a way that lacks cultural sensitivity toward non-Western traditions and values, which are largely underrepresented, while imposing, norms and values rooted in eurocentric ideologies such as the ‘enlightenment’, Western philosophy, and Christian theology. This includes labeling certain non-Western business practices as unethical and backward:

As a result of these Eurocentric tendencies, many non-Western standards are labelled ‘unethical’ and corporations from non-Western countries are expected to adapt to these standards if they want to operate in a Western setting (often and dangerously misunderstood as a universal standard and global setting), while the reverse discourse – how Western corporations should operate in non- Western countries – is largely absent in academic discourse on [CSR]. (Bergman et al., 2015, p. 184).

As a result, CSR is shaped by a fundamental misunderstanding that sustainability problems are a result of policy and management failures rather than recognizing that business is often the problem

rather than the solution (Lund-Thomsen, 2004). Thus, eurocentrism is “one of the main challenges in the field of corporate responsibility research” (Rahdari et al. 2016 as cited in Demssie et al., 2019 p. 828) whereby “Africa, Latin America, and Asia are almost totally absent” (Sterling et al. 2017 as cited in Demssie et al., 2019, p. 828). These issues are then turned into technical problems to be solved and measured through social and environmental “accounting” (Lund-Thomsen, 2004). Jammulamadaka (2015 as cited in G. D. Sharma & Handa, 2021, p. 425) calls this “eurocentric CSR” and argues that this “third world reality constructed by this eurocentric corporate social responsibility, silences and/or denies the possibility of existence of alternate trajectories of fulfilling business responsibility and ensuring welfare.”

Drebes (2014) and Giuliani (2020) further assert that businesses under capitalism, particularly MNCs, are often motivated to adopt CSR practices if it is economically beneficial to do so rather than being the right thing to do and that these practices are often touted as win-win but are nothing more than business-as-usual practices that serve to maximize profits and offer no ingenuity in making a sustainable difference. This practice is known as greenwashing, where business turns their exploitative behavior “into positive selling points” (Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020, p. 356) but do little to improve these behaviors despite publicly committing to CSR (Lund-Thomsen, 2004). Moreover, CSR mandates often do not address the cause of unsustainability, namely the capitalistic doctrine of encouraging customers to overconsume, exacerbating environmental and socioeconomic impacts (Karlsson and Ramasar, 2020).

Additionally, CSR is often consigned to legal departments whereupon firms are merely complying with public pressure and corporate reputation rather than embracing it as their business maxim (Bergman et al., 2015). In other words, CSR is driven by fear of punishment and/or the pursuit of reward (Drebes, 2014). Therefore, Giuliani (2020) argues that firm arbitrages and tensions created by capitalism cannot be simply written off by undertaking corporate “good deeds.” Rather, for CSR to be legitimate argues Bergman et al (2015), it must be authentic and deliberate, not merely an implementation of firm preferences.

2.4.4.2 Entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurship code was applied to papers that focused on small business and self-employment, representing 12% of the articles. Essers and Tedmanson (2014, p.355) characterize mainstream entrepreneurship literature as “a heroic, male, white entrepreneurial archetype” that

depicts the entrepreneurial spirit as a male-gendered and ethnocentric (Western) process, neglecting women and non-Western representations, which positions entrepreneurship as a prospect preordained for a certain group, rather than an option for everyone (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014). They also point to other research that suggests ethnic enclaves are a way for some immigrant entrepreneurs to manage discrimination while trying to maintain self-esteem and achieve economic mobility (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014). Awatere et al. (2017, p. 81) examine how Māori principles inform Māori entrepreneurship, which embraces the idea of reciprocity for “regulating cultural and commercial imperatives... [and] a spiritual ethos or mauri (life force).”

2.4.4.3 International Business

Twelve percent of papers were coded for international business, which examines MNCs, global relations, and inevitably the West/non-West dichotomy.

All these articles explored how the West continues to create barriers to exclude the non-West from ‘catching up’ while ensuring their progress continues to be reliant on the West (Adams et al., 2018; Hemais et al., 2021; Komlosy, 2021). One way this occurs is by the West using poorer polities for resources and ‘cheap labor’, which necessitates the development of new transportation and communication infrastructure (Komlosy, 2021). This forces businesses and governments in these countries (that are already in financial hardship) to borrow from the West, both perpetuating the cycle of dependence and worsening their conditions (Hemais et al., 2021). And if they do not respond accordingly, they are excluded from the market or relegated to subordinate positions on the commodity chains (Komlosy, 2021). As a result of this dependency, many ‘developing’ countries are purposely prevented from advancing due to conditions created by the West (Hemais & Santos, 2021).

Adams et al. (2018) link to studies that showcase how MNCs engage in incendiary practices such as tax avoidance by overpricing imports and income-shifting strategies by underpricing exports, which result in yearly profit increases for MNCs even when the local economies they operate in are in decline. MNCs are also continuing practices employed during colonial times by instituting divide-and-rule strategies in the areas they operate in, allowing them to evade responsibility for the nefarious risks and impacts they create (Maak, 2009; Adams et al., 2018). Moreover, these practices are perceived as legitimate if they maintain profits (Giuliani, 2020). Finally, Maak (2009) remarks that MNCs are guided by principles of *individualism*, *universality*, and *generality*.

2.4.4.4 Human Resources

The HR code was applied to articles that dealt with issues related to organizational behavior, occupational/workplace health/wellness, training, recruitment, employee engagement, learning, and development. Nine percent of papers received this coding.

In Western countries, the workplace is where individuals are most likely to meet people from different backgrounds due to globalization, immigration, and technology (Martin & Nakayama, 2015). Within this dynamic, individuals interpret communication differently based on who is doing the communication, which is heavily influenced by race, gender, class, and age (Martin & Nakayama, 2015). However, Martin and Nakayama (2015, p. 14) found that “diversity management” can justify workplace disparities because these communicative models are generally “based on Eurocentric, ethnocentric, and egocentric perspectives”, which tend to be normatively unfair, insensitive, ineffective, and disregard underlying power hierarchies and systemic barriers.

This, alongside cultural attitudes, results in structural disparity among “identity groups” such as race, gender, language, nationality, economic differences, and religion (Martin & Nakayama, 2015). As a result, a vast number of social injustices within business management fall under the HR category such as pay inequities, lack of diversity in management positions, and human rights abuses (Logsdon et al., 2008; Giuliani, 2020). For example, companies strategically hire migrant seasonal workers for exploitative reasons such as offering low pay, as well as no pension, benefits, or training (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019).

2.4.4.5 Marketing

The marketing code was applied to six percent of the papers, which pertain to activities such as marketing, sales, branding, public relations, and communications.

Karlsson and Ramasar (2020) contend that business has manufactured demand for unnecessary products and services that have led to overproduction and overconsumption to maximize profits despite the high environmental burdens this causes. Gibson-Graham and colleagues (2019) further argue much of this manufactured demand is rooted in a mindset of creating a world of comfort and convenience, a mentality that is responsible for much of the world’s sustainability problems. Brady and Monani (2012 p. 151) note that “the discourse of sustainable development adopted by marketers and politicians does not address questions of inequitable economic growth over the last two centuries,

but rather, prescribes patterns of consumption, without truly questioning profit-driven values”, which circles back to Karlsson and Ramasar's (2020) argument that businesses manufacture demand to maximize their profits.

2.4.4.6 Operations

The Operations code was applied to six percent of the papers, which accounts for activities such as production, manufacturing, procurement, supply chain, facilities, transportation, and logistics.

As part of their strategic direction for profit maximization, many Western firms have and continue to migrate their operations abroad where there are lower labor costs, and weak and/or unenforced environmental and human rights regulations, exposing workers to hazardous conditions and severe health implications (Lund-Thomsen, 2004). As a result, there is a large range of human rights risks and injustices related to business operations, which include modern-day slavery and child labor (Giuliani, 2020). Zoller (2016, p. 98) also remarks that “corporations are often a source of illness and health problems [in communities and that], researchers do not always specifically investigate the unique challenges of targeting corporations versus other kinds of institutions.” Park and Pellow (2011 as cited in Karlsson and Ramasar, 2020) argue that the social distance between those who produce and those who consume in an environmentally “unjust world” has created environmental privilege, most of which has been covered under the CSR and International Business sections.

2.4.4.7 Strategy

Six percent of papers were coded as Strategy, which refers to functions that support a firm’s strategic goals and vision.

De Silva et al. (2016) and Kalnins and Dowell (2017) found that firms in “dirty” industries (those required to report toxic releases inventory (TRI)) are more likely to enter non-white neighborhoods and non-TRI firms are less likely to enter non-white communities. In other words, firms make strategic decisions to establish operations in communities based on racial and class differences whereby low-income and PoC communities are burdened the most by an uneven distribution of environmental pollution and hazards, deepening environmental injustices (De Silva et al., 2016; Kalnins & Dowell, 2017).

Another strategic decision is to secure a social license to operate (SLO), which Mather and Fanning (2019, p. 498) suggest has been adopted by many companies, particularly in resource-extractive

industries to demonstrate their CSR efforts when in reality it is simply “a crude attempt ...in the face of real or potential community resistance” that companies secure SLOs rather than communities granting them.

2.4.4.8 Business Schools

Three percent of the papers were coded for business schools. While not a business function, there are several reasons why business schools are critical to this conversation. First, they offer MBA programs, which are much sought after by business professionals and groom business professionals, making the curricula of business schools important (Karodia & Soni, 2014). Karodia and Soni (2014) also note that business scholars are often steeped in colonial history and in many cases, companies fund business schools, which are also immersed in colonial history and therefore, are motivated to maintain the status quo. Additionally, high tuition for MBAs limits who can pursue higher education in business schools, which are generally people of privilege and affluence (Karodia & Soni, 2014). Prominent positions in business schools are also mostly occupied by white scholars and gatekeepers, which further perpetuates disparities and colonial myths (Karodia & Soni, 2014).

To conclude, this section explores how eurocentrism and JS manifest within the context of business management and illuminates how historically and currently, the West depends on the exploitation of people and nature to maximize profits and enhance the comfort and well-being of Western peoples. Whereas JS responds to sustainability disparities created by eurocentrism through the inclusion of multiple and diverse perspectives.

2.5 Discussion and Future Research

To create authentic, viable, and sustainable solutions we must have an accurate understanding of the problems versus what we think we know. Understanding the impact and influence of eurocentrism helps to see why there are disparities, where they originate from, and where and how they still exist. Without these discussions, we are prone to limited, false, and/or misguided perceptions that perpetuate misleading narratives, even by well-intentioned people, and thus, the imperative for a plurality of perspectives in the sustainability discourse is critical rather than working only within the current and prevailing eurocentric paradigms (Prádanos, 2013), particularly as “Sustainability means different things to different people” (Banerjee, 2011, p. 722). As such, this study sought to understand eurocentrism and JS in business management literature and their implications for sustainability and

CSR by examining their characterizations, including who is creating and contributing to these discourses and where they intersect and diverge.

2.5.1 Discourse Characterizations

To begin, eurocentrism is implicitly prevalent and interwoven in business management literature well beyond these SLR articles. Additionally, studies may use other descriptors such as Westernization or imperialism, and articles published in the last 20 years are likely to use more contemporary terms such as decolonization. The purpose of this SLR is to examine the papers that *explicitly* mention eurocentrism within business management where much of the world's unsustainability stems from because eurocentrism speaks to a *mindset*; the study further examines and contrasts this with JS literature. This allowed for not only integrating data points among different constructs but embracing new relationships, and different ways to explore this topic.

Four avatars emerged from the findings that characterize eurocentrism - *superiority, domination and oppression, universalism, and modernity*, which are also substantiated by extant literature (e.g., Wallerstein, 1997; de Sousa Santos, 2009; Shohat & Stam, 2009; Araújo & Maeso, 2012; Sabaratnam, 2013; Drebes, 2014; Sundberg, 2014; Kohn & Reddy, 2017; Wijesinghe et al., 2019). JS responds to socioeconomic and environmental injustices and inequities, largely created by eurocentrism, through the inclusion of multiple and diverse perspectives (Agyeman et al., 2003, 2016; Brady & Monani, 2012; Affolderbach & Krueger, 2017; Gibson-Graham et al., 2019).

Based on the study's search protocol, the two constructs were used as keywords by the authors; as such, how these terms are defined or whether they are defined provides useful insights. For example, if the authors believe these terms to be common knowledge and therefore, do not need to be expounded. None of the articles explicitly define eurocentrism but many of the articles speak to aspects of it through their narrative telling or latently. When a variant of eurocentrism is used as a descriptor or adjective, it may not always be clear to the reader what is meant by it or that it speaks to a mindset. For example, stating that sustainability and CSR discourse and practice are eurocentric may mislead the reader to believe that it is specific to race or geography rather than a mindset that transcends race and geography. Further, understanding eurocentrism through its four key aspects and how it applies to and pervades sustainability and CSR discourse and practice serves to provide greater depth and nuance to the term. Eurocentrism also highlights a lack of plurality, which may also shine a

light as to why the overall state of sustainability continues to worsen despite over five decades of sustainable development and CSR initiatives.

Articles that explicitly use JS define it, which is logical as the paradigm and its origins have a clear lineage, unlike eurocentrism which has scholars from many disciplines and geographies contributing to the scholarship for over half a century. Yet, in papers that use the terms environmental and social justice instead of JS, social justice is not defined and only 27% define environmental justice. Having clarity on what is meant by these terms, how they are used, and who is determining what justice looks like is crucial to both sustainability and CSR discourse, particularly for intra/intergenerational justice (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014), and thus, makes it important to understand who is contributing to these scholarships.

2.5.2 Scholarship Contributors

Who is contributing to scholarship is also important as past and current injustices have been created and shaped based on how actors with power perceive, create, shape, and disseminate the dominant discourse (Piketty, 2014). As the chronicling of this paper explains, due to eurocentrism, this power is concentrated in the discursive West, which produces dominant and discriminatory discourse about the non-West (Jammulamadaka, 2015). Therefore, it is noteworthy that 91% of the first authors received their education from a Western institution, of which 47% are from the US where there are significant historical, socioeconomic, and political differences.

Regardless if a scholar is born and raised in the West or non-West, obtaining an education from a Western institution typically suggests that one must conform to Western ideologies and research methods, which may compromise and/or shape their research (Naidoo, 2003). The dominant approach to research in the West is to generalize and theorize phenomena whereby theories and knowledge created in one context are to be universally applied in all contexts (Sabaratnam, 2013). However, knowledge is created by individuals influenced by their geography and worldviews therefore, “knowledge must be understood as localized” (Hemais & Santos, 2021, p. 317).

Further, 82% of the papers are conceptual or review papers, which offer original arguments based on extant literature rather than empirically gathering data (Hirschheim, 2008; Gilson & Goldberg, 2015), which may be another way that eurocentrism pervades. As such, there is a strong imperative to understand from fresh perspectives, how people around the world understand sustainability through

empirical inquiry (G. D. Sharma and Handa, 2021), particularly around the intersecting themes described in the following section.

2.5.3 Intersecting Themes

Several intersecting themes emerged from the findings: oppression and domination; the feminist dichotomy; economic growth as success and progress indicators; culture and spirituality; and individualism (corporate self-interest). This section expounds on the latter two.

2.5.3.1 Culture & Spirituality

Culture and spirituality are largely absent in business management scholarship examining sustainability (i.e., sustainability management) (Matten & Moon, 2004), as eurocentrism seeks to displace spirituality through Western science as the universal truth (Wallerstein, 1997). Only 12% of the SLR papers brought up culture or spirituality, all of which speak to the idea of the interdependency of nature-culture, and interestingly, all the authors are of non-Western origins.

Culture and spirituality are relevant to sustainability management, as eurocentric ideals continue to inform and dominate business and CSR practices, in which nature is viewed as a commodity; embodied by the term ‘natural resources’, which considers nature only as a purveyor of resources (Mignolo, 2011b). In other words, nature is only valued if it provides monetary benefits; any unused and unconsumed resources are deemed wasteful (Feygina, 2013). These ideas are underpinned by societal attitudes that view humans as separate from, and superior to nature (Castro, 2004). These ideas are contrary to many traditional non-Western philosophies and spiritual traditions where nature is understood to have intrinsic value that is independent of human judgment and that all beings and systems are connected (Norde, 1997).

Further, spirituality is key to sustainability management because corporate wrongdoings are not only “deeply rooted in human greed” but also ignorance about our natural world and our dependence on it (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019, p.264). Suriyankietkaew and Kantamara (2019) further suggest that greed is due to a lack of ethics and ethics are informed by spirituality hence, underscoring the criticality of spirituality in sustainability management, as well as the broader sustainability discourse.

Spirituality does not suggest a belief in God or religion (Dhaka et al., 2022). Del Rio and White (2012, p. 123) define spirituality as an “attitude toward life, making sense of life, relating to others,

and seeking unity with the transcendent”, which they argue is distinct from religion and should be treated as such. Therefore, the interplay between sustainability and spirituality is an important area for future research, not only because more than half of the world’s inhabitants follow some form of religious or spiritual tradition (D. Sharma et al., 2023) but that it may help to diminish the nature-culture divide that has led to our current state of unsustainability.

2.5.3.2 Collectivism-Individualism

The findings also suggest that studying the interplay of collectivism and individualism may be powerful in understanding how nature, the environment, and thus, sustainability are regarded by different people, which is particularly evident in the Culture and Spirituality section. For example, Awatere et al. (2017) suggest that one of the biggest challenges for business is to shift beyond the ethos of maximizing profits and toward positive communal outcomes that are centered on maximizing social well-being and reducing adverse impacts on people and nature. Kwarteng (2011, p. 8) also explains that “much of the instability in the world is a product of its legacy of individualism.”

At its core, collectivism-individualism scholarship is a study of cultural mindsets (Arieli & Sagiv, 2018). Mindsets can be described as attitudes and beliefs that shape motivations, behaviors, and how one makes sense of the world (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Collectivism is a societal archetype characterized by features such as interdependence, harmony, cooperation, and duty; traits more pronounced in many non-Western cultures (Cho et al., 2013; Ogihara & Uchida, 2014; Hwang, 2020). Whereas individualism is a societal pattern where individuals view themselves as sovereign from the collective, embodying ideals such as competitiveness, uniqueness, self-reliance, being the best, and independence; features more common in the West (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Ogihara & Uchida, 2014).

While research investigating the interplay of sustainability and collectivism-individualism is sparse, there are some empirical studies that suggest individuals who engage in environmental activism are motivated by collectivist features whereas non-activists display individualist qualities such as self-interest and apathy (Jia et al., 2017). Individuals who exhibit more collectivist traits also consider climate change as a collective undertaking (Xiang et al., 2019). As collectivism tends to focus on societal scales (Arieli & Sagiv, 2018), future research exploring the role of collectivism-individualism within the broader context of sustainability is encouraged.

2.5.4 Relevance to Business Management

As this study explores eurocentrism and JS from a business management perspective and business functions are delineated by specific areas (Table 8), this study sought to explicate what core business functions the articles predominately spoke to. Presenting the data through this framing may provide helpful insights, particularly for business leaders and the different ways in which sustainability issues can manifest and also be perceived. For 47% of articles, the main focus was on sustainability, CSR, or ethics. These papers illuminated how eurocentrism contributes to sustainability problems, and in turn, how these issues are interpreted, shaped, and disseminated, resulting in often flawed CSR responses, hence the imperative for a pluriversity approach, such as the JS paradigm.

Therefore, as more firms are adopting CSR and sustainability strategies, the significance of discussing and understanding sustainability through the prism of eurocentrism is essential given that Western superiority and hegemony, particularly by business, continue to be an oppressive force on nature and people. This requires embracing other ways of knowing and doing, as it is insufficient to simply include diverse stakeholders at the table, particularly when they are forced to operate within eurocentric systems that maintain the status quo.

Finally, the findings also reveal heavier attention on MNCs whereby only 12% of papers focused on SMEs. SMEs account for over 90% of all private-sector businesses in the majority of countries and collectively are responsible for 70% of global pollution, making their collective impact significant yet they are often overlooked (Hillary, 2004; Allen & Malin, 2008), signaling other areas for future research.

2.6 Conclusion

This study sought to understand eurocentrism and JS in business management literature and their implications for sustainability and CSR by examining their characterizations, including who is creating and contributing to these discourses and where they intersect and diverge. The key characterization of eurocentrism is the *superiority* over the non-West through *domination and oppression*, particularly through *universalism* and *modernity*. Whereas JS responds to sustainability injustices and inequities largely created by eurocentrism through the inclusion of multiple and diverse perspectives, features of plurality.

In terms of scholarship creation, the first authors for the majority of the SLR articles are from Western institutions, 47% in business, and 45% in other social sciences. Only 12% of papers are empirical whereas 88% are conceptual or review papers. The scale where these two paradigms operate is the key place where the two diverge – EUR is predominantly at the global level and JS at the local but is gaining traction in studies globally. They intersect in several key areas: oppression; the feminist dichotomy; economic growth as success and progress indicators; individualism (corporate self-interest); and the lack of culture and spirituality. The relevance to business and CSR is how eurocentrism contributes to sustainability problems, and in turn, how these issues are interpreted, shaped, and disseminated, which are often flawed responses due to misreadings of sustainability issues. In other words, the mindset that created the problem is the same mindset used to solve it (Prádanos, 2013).

To have *Just Sustainabilities* that shift society towards more inclusive and nuanced approaches to sustainability need not involve studying, theorizing, and generalizing socially constructed groups, but rather viewing them as leading actors in their own stories and solutions. This signals a need for research that analyzes and critiques established and uncontested knowledge constructed by Western standards, as well as producing knowledge from diverse voices (Go, 2013; Makrakis, 2017). It also indicates that greater care is required in how diversity-related studies are regarded and conducted and more importantly, that these accounts are not framed as victim stories that can be generalized or theorized, but rather as additional perspectives to provide richer and more nuanced perspectives. “Intellectual Eurocentrism is a hard habit to recognize and unpack. It is an even harder habit to kick” (Sabaratnam 2013, p. 274).

Chapter 3

An exploration of the climate and sustainability discourses through the perspectives of diverse business owner-managers, the implications for action, and the role of spirituality in these understandings

3.1 Abstract

Sustainability discourse and practice have largely been defined, shaped, and disseminated by Western values, systems, and epistemology as universal and superior forms of knowledge that all others need to learn from. Yet, despite over five decades of sustainable development and CSR efforts, most sustainability issues continue to worsen. This illuminates the imperative to understand and pursue sustainability in pluralistic ways, which includes not only the perspectives of people who have traditionally been excluded but also approaches to knowledge and meaning beyond the limited parameters of Western epistemology and hermeneutics. This qualitative empirical study adds to the sustainability pluriverse by exploring how diverse business owner-managers perceive sustainability. The findings show that interdependency, responsibility, longevity, and social discourses are core to sustainability, in which spirituality and culture play a key role. Whereas the discourses of superiority, power, paradoxical, and pessimism reflect reactions to the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of sustainability efforts. The study illuminates the need to move beyond eurocentric approaches that perpetuate the universality and superiority of Western knowledge and epistemology and toward modes that support other ways of knowing, thinking, and doing.

Keywords: sustainability; eurocentrism, plurality/pluriversality; collectivism- individualism; spirituality; culture

3.2 Introduction

Business (under capitalism) is held responsible for much of the world's sustainability problems (Porter & Kramer, 2011), which has led to a variety of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives over the last 50 years (ElAlfy et al., 2020). Yet the state of the world's sustainability continues to worsen (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2021). This is largely because sustainability is pursued the same way as business, underpinned by economic growth ideology, as well as the commodification of nature that created much of our sustainability woes in the first place

(Banerjee, 2003; Du Pisani, 2006). In other words, the mindset that created the unsustainability is the same mindset used to respond to it (Prádanos, 2013). Mindsets speak to attitudes and beliefs that not only guide motivations and behaviors but also how one makes sense of the world (Dweck & Yeager, 2019).

Eurocentrism is reflective of the *dominant* mindset that governs how the world fundamentally operates today (Young, 2020). This includes how development, success, and progress are viewed, undertaken, and measured (Hemais et al., 2021), premised on capitalistic ideals whereby the non-West is encouraged and expected to copy the West, which subsequently means emulating unsustainable business practices (Du Pisani, 2006; Adams et al., 2018; Komlosy, 2021). Therefore, eurocentrism is highly relevant to sustainability discourse and practice, as it informs how sustainability issues and responses are defined, shaped, interpreted, and disseminated (Craven, 2020; Amo-Agyemang, 2021). However, sustainability (including climate change) means different things to different people (Banerjee, 2003; Fleming & Vanclay, 2009), particularly as knowledge is generated by individuals and individuals are influenced by their worldviews and environment (Mignolo, 2009). Therefore, there is a strong imperative to understand how the rest of the world perceives sustainability rather than being bound to eurocentric and universalizing prescriptions (G. D. Sharma & Handa, 2021).

The West, within the context of eurocentrism, speaks to the discursive West which produces dominant discourses (Jammulamadaka, 2015). This study also refers to the geographic West to refer to European societies, people, and countries, descendants from European societies that live in colonized (e.g., Canada, Australia), as well as other lands. Non-Western refers to Asian, African, Latin American, and Caribbean countries and peoples; descendants from these regions living elsewhere; and indigenous peoples of Western countries that were colonized by Europeans, such as Australia and the US. The term Eastern is also used in this study to refer to primarily Asian countries.

Sustainability scholars and practitioners need to be aware of, understand, and respond to a diversity of sustainability perspectives “because the ways in which problems are framed and perceived are crucial factors in determining what solutions are seen to be possible” (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009, p. 12). This includes understanding the role that spirituality and culture play, an understudied area in sustainability management (Matten & Moon, 2004) even though more than half of the world’s population observes some form of religious or spiritual tradition (D. Sharma et al., 2023).

Additionally, in most countries, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the most conventional form of business and collectively account for over 70% of global pollution (Revell et al., 2010). Scholarship examining SMEs typically draws from Western people and perspectives whereas the perspectives of diverse SME owner-managers, such as those whose family origins are from the non-West are not well understood. This is a salient point, because not only are Western countries heavily relying on immigration from non-Western countries to meet their population and economic needs (Flanagan, 2020), but immigrants also disproportionately hold self-employment positions in Western countries compared to native-born entrepreneurs (Picot & Ostrovsky, 2021).

To address these gaps in literature, this study investigates the questions 1) How are the climate and sustainability discourses perceived and spoken of by diverse SME owner-managers; 2) What are the implications for action; and 3) What influence does spirituality have in these understandings? This study aims to offer a richer and more nuanced understanding of sustainability, which includes climate change. To be clear, this study does not purport to present non-eurocentric or non-Western perspectives because not only is that impossible given the saturation of eurocentrism, but it would also be next to impossible to disentangle what perspectives are embedded in colonial histories and which are not. The study simply presents the perspectives of people typically not heard from.

3.3 Literature Review

The literature review begins with a review of eurocentrism in Section 3.3.1. Beginning with a macro lens, Section 3.3.2, examines sustainability and the intersecting concepts of climate change and sustainable development, then the lens narrows to explore sustainability from a business perspective, which includes CSR, and narrows the lens further to SMEs; in each of these frames, there is an examination of how eurocentrism pervades. Next, in Section 3.3.3 spirituality and culture within the context of sustainability management are examined, which includes an exploration of collectivism-individualism.

3.3.1 Eurocentrism

The West's preoccupation with modernity spans millennia whereby Christian theology was instrumental in shaping (Mignolo, 2011b). But it was during Europe's 'enlightenment' in particular and the industrial revolutions that followed, along with capitalism that bolstered the illusion that human progress was linked with economic growth, deepening the nature-culture divide (Du Pisani,

2006). The mindset that underpins these ideas is what is known as eurocentrism, which purports the belief that European peoples, customs, standards, knowledge, values, and histories are superior while typecasting and discriminating against the non-West in blatant and clandestine ways (Sabaratnam, 2013; Sundberg, 2014; Wijesinghe et al., 2019).

While eurocentrism is entangled racially with the white race, religiously via Christianity, philosophically through the ‘enlightenment’, economically by way of capitalism, and geographically with the West, it has pervaded non-Western and non-white societies alike and thus, governs how the world fundamentally operates (Shohat & Stam, 2009; Young, 2020). Based on a systematic literature review of eurocentrism within the context of business management, there are four key features of eurocentrism: superiority, oppression and domination, modernity, and universalism, which are also reflective of the broader eurocentrism scholarship (Patara, 2024a).

Superiority manifests through perceptions that the non-West is inferior to the West, particularly concerning race, culture, values, customs, ideas, knowledge, and histories whereby the West is placed at the center stage of the world civilization (Drebes, 2014). These views are also entangled with the savior complex whereupon the non-dominant groups are seen as victims in need of charity, “incapable of helping themselves” (Cammarota, 2011, p. 244) rather than acknowledging these issues are entrenched in systemic inequities constructed by eurocentrism which continue to produce, influence, and maintain today’s disparities and injustices (Brodie, 2007).

While past expressions of oppression and domination are most perceptible by colonization and slavery, current manifestations are still found in systems such as neocolonialism (i.e., military, political, and economic control), globalization, religion, racism, capitalism, science, and academia by the West (Araújo & Maeso, 2012; Wijesinghe et al., 2019). Oppression and domination are also discernable through exclusion such as omitting, minimizing, and gatekeeping the voices and participations of ‘others’ (Sabaratnam, 2013). Thus, oppression and domination are not just of people and nature but also of ideas, knowledge, and thought.

Modernity stems from the idea that the West is sophisticated and progressive while the non-West is backward and inferior and thus, requires “catching up” by copying the West (Komlosy, 2021). Ideas of modernity continue to justify ‘civilizing missions’ that impose the West’s version of progress when often it is about exploiting resources for the West’s self-interest, particularly under the euphemisms of globalization and neoliberalism (Shohat & Stam, 2009; Hemais & Santos, 2021; Komlosy, 2021).

Some argue that the goal of modernity is not that the non-West actually ‘catch up’, as maintaining disparities is required for the West to maintain its hegemony, rather it is to be obeyed (i.e., dominate) for its self-interest (Maalouf, 2000).

Universalism, particularly of thought, intellect, ideas, values, and customs imbues the idea that science is both the universal truth and authority across all time and space (Wallerstein, 1997). This includes forcing Western ideals and values onto other societies and cultures because the West deems itself as the civilization that all others need to learn from (Wallerstein, 1997). Universalism also manifests through discursive power in which non-Western knowledge and expertise may only gain currency in the West if/when endorsed by the West, which can be appropriated as newly discovered knowledge rather than giving due recognition (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017).

To summarize, eurocentrism is the *mindset* that upholds the belief that Western values, knowledge, education, science, and cultures are superior and has knowingly and unknowingly spread through systems such as colonization, globalization, and academia and is now mainly about the domination of thought and culture and no longer specific to just race or geography (Shohat & Stam, 2009; Wijesinghe et al., 2019). Eurocentrism was purposefully selected for this study not only for its rich scholarship but also because it governs how the world fundamentally operates today (Young, 2020).

3.3.2 Sustainability

Environmental exploitation has long been underpinned by the dominant societal attitudes in Western civilizations that regard humans as separate from, and superior to nature in which they have dominion over Earth; ideas embraced through Christian theology that gained popularity in the West millennia ago (Leopold, 1949; Norde, 1997; Du Pisani, 2006). This was (and still is) guided by a belief that nature is only valuable if it provides monetary gain rather than nature having inherent value, inciting views that unused and unconsumed resources are wasteful, which have not only led to many unsustainable undertakings (Skolimowski, 1974; Feygina, 2013) but the colonization of people and land for “cheap labor and nature” (Hickel, 2021).

Shortly after World War II, colonization fell out of favor, not due to the realization that colonization was also underpinned by Nazi ideology but rather because it had become financially unviable for the colonizers given the debts they had accrued from the war (Hennessey, 2022; Housley, 2023). Yet, the West still needs its “cheap labor and nature” (Hickel, 2021; Komlosy, 2021), and thus, attention shifted to economic development, which remains “almost synonymous” with economic growth

(Purvis et al., 2019, p. 683). Development materialized as the ‘solution’ to bridge the inequities and poverty, as well as a path toward progress and modernity, birthing the binary of developed/developing countries, as well as modernization theory (Du Pisani, 2006). Modernization theory claims that ‘developing’ countries do not have the ability to develop and modernize on their own due to their inherent inferiority and thus, require Western intervention (Mignolo, 2011b). To come into modernity, ‘developing’ countries need to emulate the “mental models of the West (rationalization), the institutions of the West (the market), the goals of the West (high mass consumption), and the culture of the West (worship of the commodity)” (Peet, 1999, p. 85-86).

In actuality, the development and modernization of the ‘developing’ world were (and still are) largely out of self-interest/individualism to maintain access to cheap labor and nature (Komlosy, 2021).

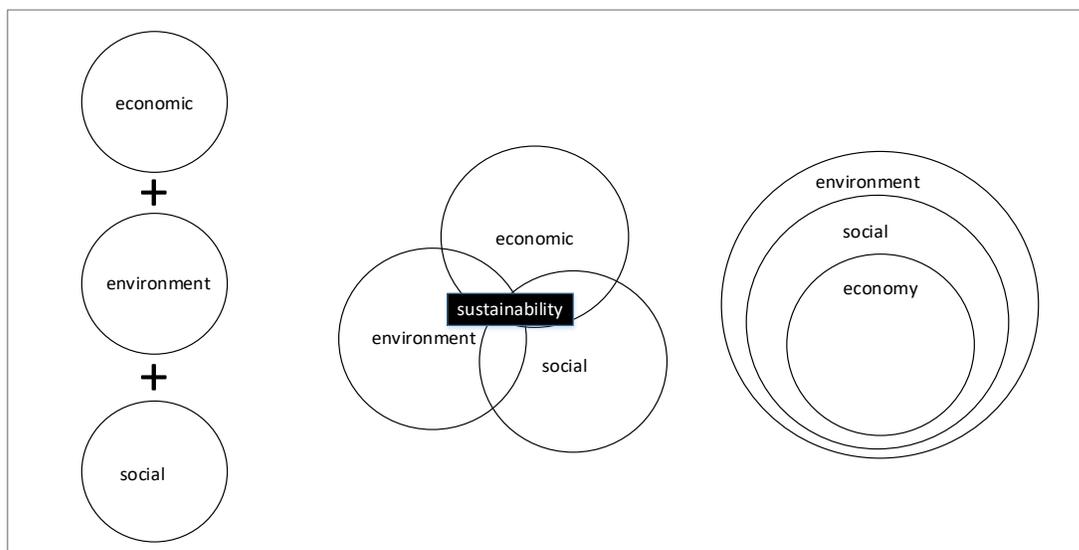
While supporters of modernization theory have subsided, the underlying ideology persists (Straubhaar, 2015) under the euphemisms of globalization and sustainable development (Banerjee, 2003; Shohat & Stam, 2009; Young, 2020). Sustainable development not only “epitomizes the modern *Western idea of sustainability*” (Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022, p. 1), it is rooted in the economic growth ideology and the commodify of nature that created much of our unsustainability problems in the first place (Du Pisani, 2006; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022). The purpose of this chronicling is to illustrate how Western ideas of modernity and progress that emerged during Europe’s ‘enlightenment’ serve as the antecedents to today’s concept of sustainable development (Du Pisani, 2006) and sustainability, as the two are used interchangeably in both mainstream and academic discourses (Banerjee, 2003; Purvis et al., 2019).

The contemporary use of sustainability in the English language appears to have emerged in our lexicon in the early 1970s but its proliferation took hold in 2015 with the publication of the SDGs (Purvis et al., 2019; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022). Sustainability is a normative idea that has been adapted to manage various problems and therefore, is not defined through a singular conception, resulting in a multiplicity of meanings in different disciplines and contexts (Kates et al., 2005; Bond et al., 2012). For instance, in management literature, sustainability generally implies business continuity (Aras & Crowther, 2009). Spatial and temporal dimensions also modify the meaning of sustainability, especially from industry to industry, and country to country (Venturelli et al., 2017) leading to calls to abandon a universal definition (Rego et al., 2017).

However, the universalizing of sustainability continues, which from a Western context has become ubiquitously linked with the balancing and/or integration of environmental, social, and economic goals yet “without much disciplined thought about how it does and does not translate into a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability” (Thompson, 2017 as cited in Purvis et al., 2019, p. 682). Some argue that the compartmentalized conceptions of sustainability, as portrayed in its various forms in Figure 6, perpetuate tensions among priorities (Gibson, 2006), which Bansal and Song (2017) refer to as a *compositional fallacy*, as the three can be perceived as unrelated, creating trade-offs and thus, a “poor fit” for addressing sustainability problems.

One of the most prevalent sustainability challenges the world is grappling with is anthropogenic climate change due to excessive emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) that abnormally increase the Earth’s temperature (Steffen et al., 2018). These changes bring about more frequent and extreme weather events such as heat/cold waves, hurricanes, floods, and droughts (Yashura et al., 2011; Kebede et al., 2012) that not only result in environmental impacts, but also pose significant socioeconomic risks such as exacerbating food and water insecurity, property damage, and income loss that jeopardize the livelihoods, health, and safety of individuals, which impacts poorer people and regions the greatest (Levy & Patz, 2015). Therefore, climate change is not only a burgeoning environmental issue but also a socioeconomic and political one besieged by issues of injustices, inequities, and exclusion (Fisher, 2015), and thus, a nested theme within sustainability.

Figure 6: Common Conceptions of Sustainability



Adapted from Purvis et al. (2019)

Within a business context, sustainability commitments by large firms are generally linked to CSR, which refers to the voluntary actions of a firm to integrate sustainability as part of its business strategy (Demssie et al., 2019). Variations of the three-pillared approach to sustainability for business include the triple bottom line; people, planet, profits; and environment, social, and governance (ESG) (Mahsud et al., 2018). But, the mere fact that a business has a CSR strategy does not suggest that it is implemented or that it is effective (Fassin, 2008). It is also the application, operationalization, and monitoring of sustainability strategies (Starik & Kanashiro, 2013). In other words, CSR is not just about developing strategies and reports but also having the right attitude (Fassin, 2008).

Yet, businesses are often motivated by external drivers such as decreasing reputational risks and increasing public image, legitimacy, and credibility rather than being intrinsically motivated by a sense of responsibility or ethics (Parguel et al., 2011) because CSR performance, whether negative or positive, has a direct impact on a firm's intangible assets (Patara & Dhalla, 2022). Thus, sustainability is often premised on a "fundamental misreading" of social and environmental problems (Lund-Thomsen, 2004). It is therefore, unsurprising that CSR is entangled with greenwashing, riddled with reporting inaccuracies and ambiguities (Parguel et al., 2011; Junior et al., 2014).

Responses to address the shortcomings of CSR are also besieged with the same problems, such as Porter and Kramer's (2006; 2011) shared value creation (SVC), which they define as expanding the total pool of economic and social value. The bottom/base of the pyramid (BoP) is a form of SVC that refers to the world's largest but poorest group, which its proponents (e.g., management scholars such as Hart & Christensen, 2002; Hammond & Prahalad, 2004) regard as an untapped market that private businesses can make significant profits from, while purportedly helping the poor, promoted as a win-win. However, the BoP proposition also exploits the poor by marketing luxury products like tobacco, alcohol, and skin-whitening creams, which exacerbate issues of substance and domestic abuse, racism, and sexism, and promotes single-serve products that are more costly and have a higher environmental impact (Karnani, 2007).

As such, enterprises under the guise of sustainable/green capitalism/consumption reproduce many of the issues they claim to be solving, as they are primarily pursued to create economic value rather than reducing environmental impact; in other words, they are premised on the economic growth ideology (Banerjee, 2003; Du Pisani, 2006; Agyeman, 2013). This ideology involves manufacturing demand for unnecessary products and services for profit maximization regardless of the social and

environmental burdens it creates (Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020). Much of the world's sustainability problems can be attributed to this manufactured demand that perpetuates a lifestyle of convenience, comfort, and entitlement, which has led to overconsumption (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019).

Jammulamadaka (2015) refers to this as 'eurocentric CSR' because it promotes Western ideas of sustainability, which are deemed to be superior and universal while non-Western ideas are discounted or ignored. This study broadens it to *eurocentric sustainability*, as the above chronicling highlights how sustainability discourse and practice have been largely defined, shaped, interpreted, and disseminated by Western values, judgment, systems, and epistemology that are presented as universal and superior forms of knowledge that all others need to learn from and adopt (Mignolo, 2011b).

Degrowth scholarship, which considers sustainable development as an "oxymoron", not only criticizes the growth ideology and the belief that modernization and technology are the solutions to our sustainability woes (Demaria et al., 2013; Demaria & Kothari, 2017) but also confronts many aspects of eurocentric sustainability (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019). Though the *idea* of degrowth is said to have originated in the non-West (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019) in which both Western and non-Western scholars have shaped and influenced (Demaria et al., 2013), there are many critiques that degrowth's traction in the West is reproducing longstanding neocolonial disparities where the West, is once again "setting the agenda on what ought to be done to solve problems of global relevance in the Global North" and as such, reenacting its colonial heft (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019, p. 246).

For example, Muradian (2019) argues degrowth promotes the values of middle-class Western people while ignoring issues of equality and justice, such as the aspirations of the vast majority who desire upward socioeconomic mobility, and thus, suggests degrowth is likely to be ineffectual. This is because it omits issues of intra and intergenerational equity and justice, which are supposedly fundamental features of sustainable development (Ala-Uddin, 2019). Intragenerational inequity is attributed to the wasteful lifestyles of the wealthy, who are in the minority and mostly in the West, creating innumerable problems for the majority who are mainly in the non-West (Sikdar, 2003).

Intergenerational inequity speaks to the increasing and unsustainable rate of consumption that is anticipated to deprive the needs of future generations (Sikdar, 2003), both in the West and non-West.

Additionally, the focus on business tends to be on large or multinational corporations (MNCs), particularly as they have taken over the role of colonizing countries in which they exploit people and nature for self-serving goals and evade the responsibility for their nefarious impacts (Maak, 2009;

Adams et al., 2018). However, 90% of businesses in most countries are SMEs and collectively represent 70% of global employment and global pollution (Hörisch et al., 2015; World Economic Forum, 2021), illuminating their significant impact.

Scholarship examining SMEs' engagement in environmental action is strongly influenced by owner-managers' values and attitudes (Hammann et al., 2009; Brammer et al., 2012; Cantele and Zardini, 2020; Schaefer et al., 2020). However, scholarship typically draws from Western peoples and perspectives whereas perspectives from non-Western peoples are not well understood. This is relevant given that many Western countries rely on immigration from non-Western countries to meet their economic and population goals (Flanagan, 2020) and immigrants disproportionately hold self-employment positions in Western countries compared to native-born (Abada et al., 2012; Picot & Ostrovsky, 2021). SMEs also vary greatly when it comes to type, size, model, industry, country, and culture (Williams and Schaefer, 2013; Koirala, 2018; 2019). Therefore, not only is understanding diverse perspectives on sustainability crucial but also the interplay of culture and spirituality in these understandings, particularly as some form of spiritual or religious tradition is observed by more than half of the world's population (D. Sharma et al., 2023). Moreover, values are informed by ethics, and for many ethics are guided by spirituality (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019), and spirituality and culture shape one another (Grimshaw, 2018).

3.3.3 Spirituality & Culture

An individual's worldview is shaped by various factors such as their experiences, education, discipline, environment, upbringing, values, and spiritual and cultural beliefs (Darwin Holmes, 2020; Hemais et al., 2021), which helps to illuminate why "Sustainability means different things to different people" (Banerjee, 2011, p. 722). Leal Filho et al. (2022, p. 4) suggest that the unsustainability of our world is linked to the "disenchantment and detachment from the natural world" (i.e., the nature-culture divide), which is due to a lack of spirituality (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019).

Spirituality is not synonymous with religion nor does it suggest a belief in God (Del Rio & White, 2012; Dhaka et al., 2022). Spirituality can be defined as an "attitude toward life, making sense of life, relating to others, and seeking unity with the transcendent" (Del Rio & White, 2012, p. 123), inferring that spirituality is non-universal, and also means different things to different people.

Further, there are different cosmovisions across cultures to convey the interdependency that exists among nature, humans, and non-human beings such as Mother Earth or Mother Nature, a common

expression in many regions (Nunez, 2011; Ramirez, 2021). From a kaupapa Māori context, there is “utu (reciprocity), manaakitanga (an ethic of generosity) and kaitiakitanga (sustainable resource management)... whanaungatanga (community connectedness)” (Awatere et al., 2017). Ubuntu philosophy, which is respected in many African cultures and societies, advocates for communalism and human kindness (Adams et al., 2018). Similar ideas are also expressed through *sumak kawsay* (Ecuador’s Kichwa language), *suma qamaña* (the Aymara language in Bolivia), and *buen vivir* in the Spanish language, which all translate to living well (Acosta & Abarca, 2018).

This is a small sampling but these cosmovisions embody the *idea* of sustainability, illuminating the importance of spirituality and culture in these understandings, which van Norren (2020, p. 431) notes have an “inherent biocentric value orientation” in that they do not have connotations to economics, progress, or growth nor the environment, unlike eurocentric approaches, which advocate Western ideas of modernism (e.g., SDGs) that maintain “growth/results thinking which requires unlimited resource exploitation”, as well as expressions of individualism. However, culture and spirituality are generally absent in sustainability management (Matten & Moon, 2004; Luetz & Nunn, 2023). This absence can be largely attributed to the consequences of eurocentrism which seeks to displace spirituality through science and capitalism as universal truths (Wallerstein, 1997), deepening the nature-culture divide (Leal Filho et al. 2022).

Eurocentrism is also perceptible in Western studies that seek to understand non-Western peoples and cultures. This is particularly evident in religion, a concept derived from a “Christian-European” context, which Western scholars use to understand and interpret the complex nature of Eastern philosophies, faiths, and traditions in a manner that simplifies and distorts (Mandair, 2009; Hwang, 2020). However, the complexity of Eastern philosophies “makes it inappropriate to use any Western idea of social science to understand its functioning” (Hwang, 2020, p. 874). For example, Europeans have been attempting to “scientifically” study Buddhism since the 19th century, resulting in countless debates on whether it is a religious or spiritual tradition, missing the point of Buddhism (Murthi, 1955/2008; Rajapakse, 1986).

One example that continues to have rippling sustainability repercussions in present-day India is the term *Hindu*, which was initially used as an identity marker linked to land (*Hindustan*) from at least the 15th century to refer to the indigenous people living in the Indus region (Mandair, 2009). Prior to British colonization, the word *Hinduism* did not exist nor the concept of religion; both these ideas

were brought in based on a “Christian-European category of religion” and incorrectly applied Hindu to mean religion (Mandair, 2009, p. 53). Before this, inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent practiced their beliefs based on *Sanatan Dharm* (Viswanathan, 2014). *Dharm* can be defined as “the universal law governing the universe’s physical and moral order” (Dhaka et al., 2022, p. 3). *Sanatan* means eternal and thus, *Sanatan Dharm* can be translated as eternal law, which is the basis of most Indic faiths (what is today known as Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism), informing ideas on life; death, birth, and nature (Viswanathan, 2014). The principles of *Sanatan Dharm* are embodied in the Vedas (one of the oldest texts dating back to 1500 BC) that, in part, articulate virtues on how humans ought to engage with the natural world, which includes ideas such as *duty*, *responsibility*, encapsulated by the idiom of *Mother Earth* (Frankopan, 2023). Many Indic traditions also uphold the principles of *non-duality* and *no-self*, referring to “all living creatures and nature are seen as one”; ideas that are gaining more recognition in the West (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019; Mandair, 2022; D. Sharma et al., 2023, p. 2). Non-duality embodies the idea that all beings and systems are interdependent, and nature has inherent value independent of human judgment that is not necessarily or explicitly linked to environmentalism or conservation but rather a tacit understanding.

According to Suriyankietkaew & Kantamaram (2019), spirituality is also integral to the *idea* of sustainability because corporate atrocities are rooted in human greed; greed is a result of a lack of ethics; and a lack of ethics is due to a lack of spirituality. Not only are sustainability and spirituality interwoven, but spirituality “is instrumental in understanding the inseparable connectivity between the planet and all living things, including humans” and thus, greater understandings between spirituality and sustainability need to be cultivated (Leal Filho et al. 2022, p. 9). Spirituality within organizations is essential in illuminating the “interdependency of all living things” so that leaders can understand the importance of appropriate resource use through principles such as moderation, “having enough”, and *doing no harm* to others, which extends to nature and non-humans (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019, p. 268).

Further, “much of our relationship with the world around us is a result of culture” (Leal Filho et al. 2022, p. 3). Culture can be defined as “ideas, institutions, and interactions that tell a group of people how to think, feel and act” (Markus & Conner, 2014, p. xix). Spirituality and religion are shaped by culture and vice versa (Grimshaw, 2018). For example, Christianity practiced in the US is likely to be very different from the Christianity practiced in Lebanon or India given the differences in culture and mindsets.

Most broadly, collectivism-individualism scholarship is the study of cultural mindsets (Arieli & Sagiv, 2018). Individualism is a societal archetype whereupon individuals see themselves as autonomous from the collective, characterized by competitiveness, being the best, unique, self-reliant, and independent; traits more pronounced in the West (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Ogiwara & Uchida, 2014). Collectivism refers to qualities such as concern for the welfare of one’s community, ‘relationship harmony’, support of others, and interdependence; features more reminiscent of non-Western cultures (Ogiwara & Uchida, 2014; Krassner et al., 2017). In short, the former is about the “I” and the latter is about “we/us” (Pelham et al., 2022). Moreover, characterizations of many non-Western civilizations also reveal a reverence for continuity and stability whereas the West is more focused on ‘progress’ (Wood, 2020; Hunt, 2021). Table 12 presents some of these characterizations from scholarship.

Table 12: Common Characterizations of Collectivism-Individualism

Individualism	Collectivism
Independence	Interdependence
Self-reliance	Relatedness
Competition	Group conformity/belonging
Freedom	Cooperation
Right of choice	Face-saving
Self-realization	Duty
Individual goal striving	Harmony
Uniqueness	Seeking advice from others
Self-privacy	Contextualization
Self-knowledge	Hierarchy
Rights	Preference for group work

Adapted from Triandis & Suh, 2002; Cho et al., 2013; Markus & Conner, 2014; Ogiwara & Uchida, 2014; Krassner et al., 2017; Hwang, 2020

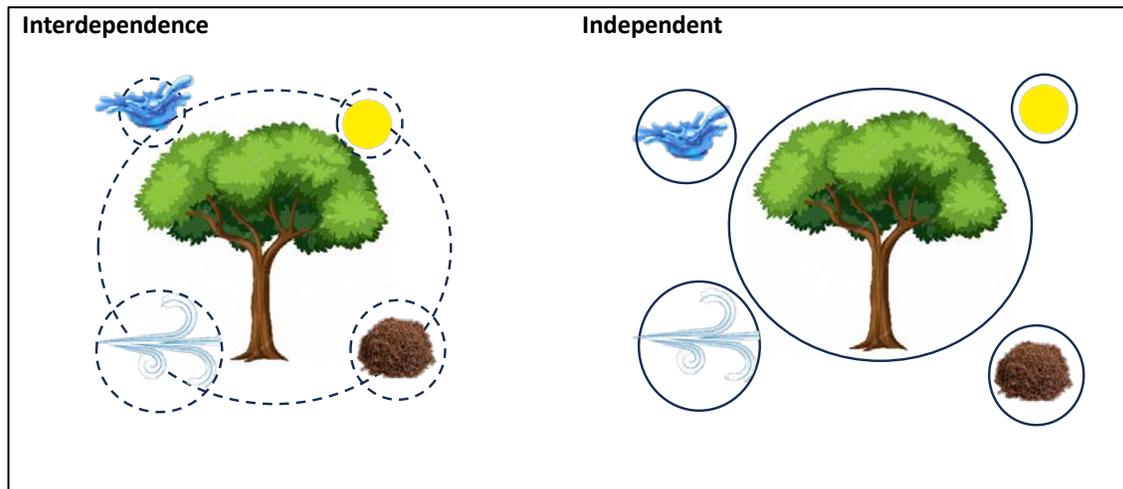
Collectivism-individualism scholarship is noted for its generalizations and eurocentricity (Pelham et al., 2022), as individualism is based on the sum of characteristics by which Westerners see and define themselves whereas collectivism represents the Westerner’s ideological understanding of the ‘antithetical other’ (Hwang, 2020). Moreover, the collectivism-individualism framing in Western literature approaches it from an individualist lens whereas scholarship from a collectivist lens is limited (Hwang, 2020). One way this is observed is that Western scholars often perceive individualism as the opposition to collectivism, as two polarizing and bounded ideas (Hwang, 2020), exemplifying a binary way of viewing the world (Wallerstein, 1997). Whereas there is a shared understanding among Eastern scholars and philosophers that while polarity is found everywhere, it is

not seen as opposition but as aspects of a totality that are complementary and mutually dependent (Hwang, 2020).

Japan is an effective example of why examining business at the intersection of culture is crucial to sustainability. Geographically and culturally Japan is considered part of the non-West, economically it is considered part of the Global North. Japan has been able to tailor and integrate capitalism in a way that maintains the country's culture and values and therefore, "Japanese capitalism differs greatly from typical business practice in the West" (Cutts, 1992, para 1). One way this is said to have occurred is by setting limits on capitalism, particularly on private property to prevent capitalism from creating "differences between the poor and the rich" leading Takeuchi (1998, p. 5) to argue that Japan is not a capitalist economy but socialist. Another way Japan is an outlier is by maintaining *keiretsu* "long-lived, intimate relationships among suppliers and customers" (Cutts, 1992, para 1). All these aspects are reflective of collectivism (Tiessen, 1997). However, some such as Cutts (1992, para 1) characterize these features as "unfair" as it is perceived to block foreign (in particular American) companies from Japanese markets leading Cutts to compare *keiretsu* to "cartels", which are usually defined as "illegal - agreements among companies to control prices and curb competition among themselves." This example typifies a eurocentric and discriminatory understanding of a non-Western culture and practice, emphasizing the importance of examining culture and spirituality in business and sustainability management.

Markus and Conner's (2014) work on collectivism-individualism takes form through their independence and interdependence model, illustrated in Figure 7, which was adapted using a tree analogy. An interdependence framing sees the tree as a continuous entity among all aspects (sun, atmosphere, water, soil, etc.) hence, the porous (dashed) edges, as all systems are interconnected and permeable, demonstrating that these are all aspects of a totality that are complementary and mutually dependent. Whereas the independence framing sees the tree as separate from other systems – anything outside the tree circle is not a tree. This compartmentalizing is also observed in the three-pillar approach to sustainability shown in Figure 6.

Figure 7: Conceptualization of Interdependence & Independent Model



Adapted from Markus & Conner (2014)

This model may offer insightful glimpses into how nature and the environment may be perceived by this framing. While sustainability and collectivism-individualism studies are limited, some empirical studies show that individuals who engage in environmental activism are motivated by collectivist features (e.g., concern for others) whereas non-activists exhibited individualist traits such as self-interest and apathy (Jia et al., 2017). Those with collectivist features also perceive addressing climate change as a communal undertaking, in which individual contributions, although small, add up (Xiang et al., 2019).

In reviewing this scholarship, it is clear there are distinctions between collectivism and individualism, particularly in the ways of thinking and knowing (epistemology), and there are various ways collectivism-interdependence surfaces in many non-Western cultures. What these findings do not (or should not) suggest is that they accurately or wholly represent any group, country, or culture, particularly as “individualism and collectivism can exist within a single culture” (Xiang et al., 2019, p. 3). These accounts simply represent a perspective at a given time and space; they are dynamic and susceptible to influences and changes (Mignolo, 2018). The collectivism-individualism lens may be useful in understanding sustainability, particularly “[Western] theories and disciplines which, on behalf of capitalism, have theorized the universality of competition as opposed to cooperation, the economy of egoism as opposed to the economy of altruism, and buying/selling as opposed to the gift” (de Sousa Santos, 2009, p. 112).

As a conclusion to this section, the literature review exemplifies what is meant by eurocentric sustainability, signaling the need to empirically examine what sustainability means for diverse groups of people. Furthermore, despite the rich body of work within collectivism-individualism and spirituality scholarships respectively, they are generally overlooked in sustainability management. Thus, this study considers how spirituality and collectivism-individualism might inform sustainability and sustainability management scholarship and practice through a pluriversality approach.

Pluriversality is a method of approaching types of knowledge and meaning beyond the limited parameters of Western epistemology and hermeneutics (interpretation through language) (Mignolo, 2018). Pluriversality does not seek to reject or suppress any perspectives, as all viewpoints have the right to coexist in the pluriverse of meaning, and therefore, pluriversality can be adding to, complementing, coevolving, coexisting, or it may be contesting perspectives (Mignolo, 2018). Given that sustainability perspectives of SME owner-managers from non-Western origins are not well understood and manufacturing is an understudied industry (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019), this empirical study applies a qualitative approach to investigating how SME owner-managers based in Ontario, Canada's manufacturing industry, whose family origins are from the non-West regardless of where they were born, perceive sustainability and climate discourses, the implications that these understandings have for action, and what influence spirituality and culture have in these understandings.

3.4 Methods

This section describes the sampling strategy, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods employed in the study.

3.4.1 Sampling & Recruitment

Four inclusion criteria were developed for determining the sample population. One, the business is an SME (less than 500 employees) (Government of Canada, 2020a). The justification is that 90% of all private-sector businesses in most world economies are SMEs, which equates to 70% of all employment (World Economic Forum, 2021), underscoring the significance of SMEs.

Two, the business is in the manufacturing sector based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) coding of 31-33. The reasoning for this criterion is threefold, 1) the industry is a high GHG emitter, contributing to 23% of Ontario's total emissions (Government of Canada, 2021);

2) it is an understudied sector despite its high environmental impact (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019); and 3) it encompasses a diverse range of businesses such as food, plastics, metal, apparel, furniture, and electronics manufacturing (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Three, the owner-manager self-identifies as a person of color (PoC), a proxy for non-Western. Given the pervasiveness of eurocentrism and the lack of plurality in sustainability scholarship and practice, this study is interested in investigating the perspectives of a population typically not heard from in sustainability management scholarship. As the study does not seek to generalize or theorize the findings or have them applied to other contexts, there is minimal risk of treating different ethnic groups as homogenous.

Four, the business is in the province of Ontario, which is home to the largest number of SMEs (37%) (Government of Canada, 2022) and PoC population (29%) in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016), making it ideal for collecting empirical data.

The study uses the M49 geographic regions developed by the United Nations (1999), as they closely align with the working definitions of the geographic West and non-West presented in the Introduction. First-level geographic regions are used for Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Europe. Since Canada and the US are considered part of the discursive West and all other countries in the Americas are not, second-level geographic regions of Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC) and Northern America are used instead of Americas.

Respondents were recruited in several ways. The first method involved using an online database called Ontario Business Directory (n.d.), which maintains information on over 150,000 businesses in Ontario, of which 13,701 businesses were listed under the manufacturing category. Each listing was manually checked against the four criteria and if the owner could initially be contacted electronically (email or online form) in which 391 businesses were contacted; 22 interviewees were recruited using this approach. The second method included identifying and contacting 16 gatekeepers, such as the local chamber of commerce of most major cities in Southwestern Ontario. This approach yielded one interview. The third method involved asking invitees and participants identified in the first method if they know of business owners who would be interested in participating. This approach did not result in any interviews. The fourth method was through the researcher's network (e.g., social media, email, and word-of-mouth), which yielded ten interviews. In sum, 404 businesses were contacted using the methods described above, which resulted in 33 completed interviews – a participation rate of 8%.

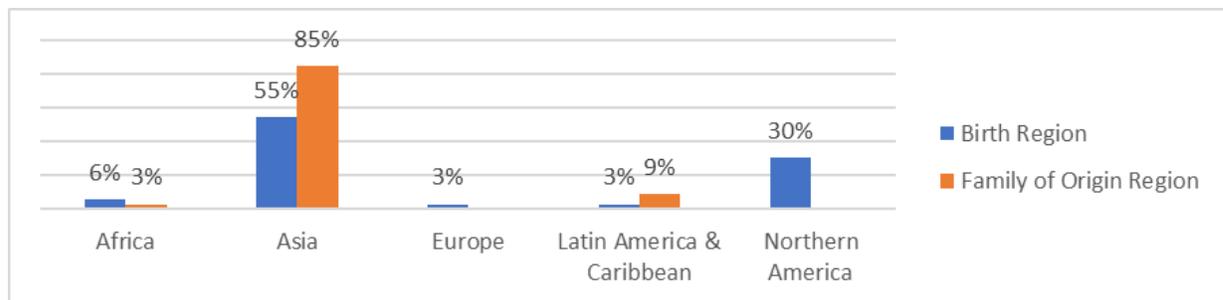
3.4.2 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, as they are a powerful research tool that allows for in-depth analysis while granting flexibility when new or unknown issues emerge, such as the incorporation of new questions that may only become evident during the interview process (Berg, 2001). The interviews were guided by a list of prompts that were partially adapted from Schaefer et al.'s (2020) interview prompts – see Appendix A.

Between April and August 2022, 33 interviews were conducted with SME owner-managers with an average length of 37 minutes. Seven interviews were conducted at the owner-managers' place of business and 26 interviews were conducted online using Zoom or Teams. Interviews were recorded with permission and then fully transcribed before being imported, and manually coded and analyzed using Excel and NVivo software.

Twenty-four percent of the owner-managers interviewed are women and 76% are men. The youngest participant was 22 and the oldest was 83 years of age, with a median of 50, a mode of 34, and a mean of 51. Figure 8 shows that the family origin region for 85% of owner-managers is from Asia, 9% from LAC, and 3% from Africa. Thirty percent were born in Canada; the 70% born elsewhere have spent more than half their life in Canada. Finally, 42% identified English as their native or first language. This information is detailed in Appendix E, along with their education major and location.

Figure 8: Family Origin & Birth Regions



3.4.3 Data Analysis

Discourse analysis is a qualitative method for interpreting language as a social practice to better understand the broader social discourses through pattern detection in communication, commonly known as language in use (Gee, 2005; Miles, 2012). Language use has consequences beyond the individual, as discourse influences how ideas are thought of, spoken, and acted on, which ultimately

shapes public perceptions (Foucault, 1972). This is because language contains values, judgments, and attitudes; the way we talk about a subject can change our views on it, and therefore, discourse can be regarded and used as an instrument of power (Fairclough, 1995). Language use is not just about what topics are spoken of but also what language is used, and what words and ideas are repeated, hinted at, or altogether excluded (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough, 1995). In short, discourse is a way of representing, reinforcing, and spreading knowledge.

In addition to language use, discourse also includes the formation of ideas, for example, how and why discourses are constructed or if they are constructed in contradictory ways (Foucault, 1972).

Discourse analysis also involves examining power relations and how discourse influences action (Foucault, 1972; Gee, 2005), which helps to understand “how each discourse empowers and empowers, or disempowers, individuals within the discourse” (Fleming et al., 2014, p. 410).

Discourse analysis was applied to this study to understand perceptions of sustainability (including climate) discourses, how these discourses gain currency, and how they may enable or constrain action (Fleming et al., 2014). Studies applying discourse analysis from a poststructuralist position, as this study does, are not considered or intended to be impartial or value-free; rather they tell an interpretation of the researcher’s reality, not universal truths (S. Taylor, 2001; Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2019). The discourse analysis process involves becoming familiar with the data through successive readings of the transcripts, generating initial codes, and detecting patterns (Brunton et al., 2018). However, they are not conceptualized as codes or themes but rather discursive discourses that pay attention to how sustainability and climate change were discussed or constructed, in which a summary of the most interesting and/or complete findings are presented (S. Taylor, 2001; Brunton et al., 2018).

3.5 Findings

To understand how diverse SME owner-managers (P) perceive sustainability and climate discourses, this section first sets the stage by presenting initial findings before delving into the eight discourses that emerged from the analysis.

“I feel [sustainability is] one of those words that you know, but now you’re asked, like what does it mean, and I’m like I don’t know” (P#29). This sentiment was reflective of many participants when asked what sustainability means to them. Five owner-managers indicated that they were not familiar with the word sustainability and therefore, did not provide a response whereas everyone offered an

answer as to what climate change means to them. Additionally, none of the participants explicitly referenced the three pillars of sustainability in any of its variations nor indicated that they were familiar with the construct. However, a few participants did speak to economic, social, and environmental dimensions such as P#12 “...continuously the improvements...for products, for employees, even for your environment.”

Most participants spoke about the environmental dimensions explicitly when speaking about climate change but not sustainability, yet environment or nature was implicitly embedded in each of the eight discourses and therefore, the environmental dimensions are not presented as a separate discourse but as a part of each discourse. However, for additional context, 39% of respondents spoke of climate change through examples of extreme weather events and natural hazards/disasters such as “Landslides, floods, slides, tsunamis. It means natural and physical destruction” (P#18). Twenty-seven percent referred to shifting weather and/or temperatures, and 15% spoke of sea-level rise or melting of ice caps or permafrost. Only 18% used the phrase global warming and 6% mentioned GHGs. The word carbon was used by 48% of respondents in various contexts – for example, two respondents mentioned carbon tax, and three mentioned carbon footprint. Carbon was also mentioned by some when explaining their understanding of climate change. Several participants mentioned recycling and pollution in many of their responses, suggesting a strong association between pollution and recycling and environmental, sustainability, and climate change topics, for example:

But then you go to another place [...such as] South Carolina or Georgia, in the US, we went there, and they don't understand recycling. So, people need to understand and watch the news or go experience that horrible thing that's happening to other people and then come and think about it twice when they ... pollute. (P#5)

Owner-managers were also asked if religion or spirituality influences their ideas of the environment or nature, as this area is largely absent in the sustainability management discourse. Fifty-eight percent indicated yes, and 42% either said no or did not provide a clear answer. For example, P#7 gave indications that they may be religious but did not provide a clear response “...it says [in religious scriptures to respect the environment] but we don't respect it.” P#9 responded with “I follow the Canadian rules that's how I look into nature” and when asked to expand on what they meant, they said, “The Canadian way of living you can call it.” When asked to provide an example of what the “Canadian way of living” is, they were not able to and indicated they were confused by the question.

Of the respondents who indicated that religion is influential to their understanding of nature, some did not or could not expand on this while others made specific references to religion such as P#17 “And one of the things that it [religious scriptures] says to keep peace with the environment because we come from the environment, we go back to the environment.”

Many of the respondents who indicated having religious leanings tended to speak of religion and spirituality as meaning the same thing. Whereas most of the respondents who indicated spirituality is influential to their ideas on nature made a point of distinguishing it from religion. For example, “To some point, religion, all religions are manmade. But spirituality is different...” (P#30) or “I’m not a religious person. But I do believe in spiritual things” (P#32). Most were able to expand on how spirituality influences their ideas of nature “... my own interpretation of spirituality is more of understanding and appreciating and trying to, you know, live almost in a balance with everything around you” (P#16).

The distinction respondents made between religion and spirituality is important, as it may have affected their answers. For example, of the 42% of respondents who answered no or gave an unclear answer, 46% indicated that they have no religious or spiritual affiliations and 23% indicated they are members of a faith group but that did not necessarily influence their ideas on nature. The other 31%, either did not provide a clear answer or answered no but their response suggested otherwise such as P#5 (who referred to Canadian indigenous practices as religion):

I am not religious at all. I don't believe in anything. But spirituality, yes. ... the best religion comes from indigenous people [of Canada]. And they respected Earth, so that they can live within it. I hear, and I see how they live their lives and how they ... respect the animals. If they need to hunt a seal, they go apologize to that seal ... 'Sorry, I need to feed my family'.

Or P#25 who answered no but then said:

And there is only one God and He has given us this environment and He has created this environment and we have to take care of it. Whether you are Christian or Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist or atheist or it doesn't really matter. This is the environment, there is only one Earth. We're not going to go and live on the moon, Mars or anywhere else, this is just this place this is it we've got to take care of it.

Taking this into consideration, the study found that 82% of respondents indicated, either explicitly or implicitly, that their views about nature and the environment are greatly or somewhat shaped by religion or spirituality.

The majority of the responses regarding spirituality spoke of interconnectedness, harmony, balance, and transcendence, as well as a moral or ethical responsibility. P#13 shared “Spirituality means ... be connected with the environment, be connected to the Earth...so you don't worry about the planet, you worry about yourself...” – in other words, we should not worry about the planet surviving because it has done so for millions of years and will continue to do so long after humans are gone (counter to the anthropogenic saying “saving/protecting the planet”); instead we should worry about ourselves and what we are doing. Additionally, P#14 shared:

From a spiritual standpoint, the answer is in front of you now and you have to accept the change now, right. ...People don't understand the spiritual connection. ...I have to sustain my environment in order for me to sustain. And in order for me to have a prolonged life or harmony and balance, spirituality is the biggest connection, right. You have to have spirituality.

Several owner-managers used the idiom *Mother Nature* or *Mother Earth*, a specific way of communicating not only interdependency but respect “...we always say Mother Earth but Earth is our Mother” (P#1), “...that’s what we say Mother Nature, right, the Earth is your mother, respect” (P#13), or “...you have to treat the land as your mother, that’s how I grew up. And so, I have never tried to do anything or be part of anything which destroys Mother Nature” (P#32).

The remainder of this section describes the eight discourses that emerged from the analysis with each discourse revealing a distinct way of speaking and thinking about sustainability and climate change – interdependency, social, longevity, responsibility, superiority, power, paradoxical, and pessimism.

3.5.1 Interdependency

In the interdependency discourse, climate change, environmental impacts, and sustainability were imbued by ideas of equilibrium, balance, interconnectedness, harmony, continuity, and offsetting. From a climate change lens specifically, it includes ideas such as “we are living in one planet, and it doesn’t matter, you know, the environment is getting bad in Canada or Japan at the end it’s the same thing” (P#9). Or “Most ways you lose with climate change whether you have too much snow or too much rain or ... it is too dry...you lose both ways...there is no equilibrium” (P#25). Similarly, these ideas also surfaced when respondents spoke about sustainability:

Let's say I eat an apple. ... Here is my choice – either I can take that apple and take it home and put it in the green bin, that's one choice, or if I see a bird, I can toss it out, duck or squirrel or someone can eat. So here, see, this one goes directly to the Earth, whereas this, when I throw it, it goes into the stomach of an animal, and from there

it goes to the Earth. ... But at the end it's within you, it's your mindset, how you want the environment or whatever, it's a mindset. (P#20)

...operating in a manner that is I guess – I wanted to say sustainable but, you know, being mindful of everything that we are doing. And, yeah, you know, hopefully, the amount of damage or the effect of what we do from our facility is offset by the greater good of what we're actually doing which we believe is necessary... (P#28)

Several owner-managers used a tree analogy when they explained what sustainability meant to them “...if you take one tree, like, are you planting another tree in its place” (P#33), an insignia for interdependency, balance, and continuity. For others, sustainability meant something more holistic in that it encompasses every aspect of life such as “Sustainability means doing things in a manner that will ensure the continuity of all of the – of everything, really... of the business, of the environment. It'll ensure the continuity of everything” (P#27), Some respondents challenged the very idea of sustainability because similarly to them it encompasses a totality:

...if you actually think about sustainability, the meaning of the actual word, it applies to every single aspect. (P#4)

Sustainability for who or what portion of the population is sustainable...what are you giving up to be sustainable? That's the question. It's discourse. ... What does it mean to each of us? What are we trying to protect and at what cost are we protecting it? ... Sustainability is knowing your place in the food chain or on Earth and actually living within the realm of what's reasonable. (P#3)

I don't see sustainability. There's no such thing as sustainability. It's always moving. It's impossible to have sustainability because at one point, something's moving and something's letting go, right. It's constantly flowing ... for me, there's no such thing as sustainability, if you want to look at it as an interplay and connection with the environment, there's harmony, right. (P#14)

3.5.2 Social

In the social discourse, interviewees spoke of sustainability and climate from a human orientation. Forty-two percent of respondents spoke of future generations, their children or grandchildren “I think of the future generation that if we don't look after it now how the effect will it be on the future generations” (P#1) or “... concern about the future generation, you know what kind of world they will inherit” (P#15) or “... sustainability means to me that my grandchildren will have the same opportunities and the same Mother Nature which I have” (P#32).

Some participants spoke about their employees, “As a business owner, I think our role is to ... take care of our employees because we’re so small we kind of treat it like family... I haven’t really thought of our role from an environmental standpoint” (P#2). Or “providing for the family well-being of your workers. You know, you want to make sure that they have a supportive and healthy household...” (P#16).

A few participants also spoke to the social dimensions in generalities, “because if we don't [address climate change], then it's going to come and bite us in the ass” (P#5) or “we are going to destroy ourselves” (P#23). P#25 was the only one who made explicit references to the social consequences:

Climate change is putting a lot of people out of homes, out of their businesses, and I can see it right now in the last few years we are seeing very severe weather and climate is the biggest factor. ... people lose their home with flooding and all that, they lose their living, they lose their environment, they lose everything.

3.5.3 Longevity

When answering the questions of what sustainability and climate change mean, only one respondent mentioned profitability and two mentioned low cost. The majority of the participants who spoke to economic aspects did so through the longevity discourse which speaks to the continuity, stability, and adaptability of their business, and in some cases, it also included product longevity. For instance, P#30 shares:

How can I keep my business going with all ...the changes that are going around. So, I have to gather up the changes coming and I have to assess how is it going to impact my business in the future ... can I continue to do that or not...what are the other alternatives that ... I have.

Some respondents linked business and product longevity to the environment such as P#2: “The ability to continue our business operations but in a somewhat environmentally friendly manner and just to be able to keep it going for as long as you can.”

3.5.4 Responsibility

Several respondents also spoke of responsibility but from contrasting perspectives and scales. For example, some spoke about personal responsibility at the individual scale such as P#1 “...it’s our duty” and P#29 “[it is] important to take care of where you live.” Whereas P#9 and P#11 spoke about responsibility at a global scale where they both thought Canada is doing more than enough but other countries are not taking responsibility:

...in Canada, we are doing I think more than enough, but all other, you know, countries... we pay carbon tax in Canada and the people, you know, from other countries shipping the stuff to us, especially the plastic products and they do not have to pay any of that tax and they keep dumping their products in Canada and we have to compete with them with paying the carbon tax. (P#9)

Other respondents such as P#20 and P#26 placed greater responsibility on the government “So it's the government who has to come up with, shall I say, the laws and regulations and implementations... the enforcement” (P#20). Or that the government should be “giving us more information of how we can make it more environment friendly” (P#26).

3.5.5 Superiority

Many of the participants expressed exasperation when they related both their perspectives on, and experiences with sustainability, particularly around overconsumption, greed, never being satisfied, competitiveness, addiction to comfort and convenience, and thinking we are advanced, all of which are embedded in a sense of superiority:

... your technological advancement...our understanding of progressiveness, advancement ... it means that more and more waste and more and more consumption is, it proves my point that how superior I am [and as a result] we are never satisfied ... (P#13)

... the biggest thing is that humans need and want for more and consumption of more. I think that's the biggest thing that people aren't being aware of. And they're lacking this basic awareness. And they're looking for convenience. They're looking to make their lives easier. They're looking to choose the easy route. And I think, based off of this, that level of overconsumption is the biggest detriment to society...they don't understand with you wanting more, someone's getting less, or something else is getting less. (P#14)

Our society has become greed-based. So, we all want something cheap. ... It should not be left to the fund managers or these MBAs who just are so hungry and greedy about money. Not everything has to work in life. I mean, Japan has a negative interest rate. There is more money than they invest because of these kinds of attitudes. So, there's a big gap where we are. We still have the British, the English [way of] thinking... (P#17)

We have to simplify our lifestyle, and simplifying lifestyle means, we have to get used to a lot of discomfort, because we are so addicted to comfort and as the generations go by, it's getting more and more ... what brings society to this mentality is the competitiveness that is engraved in our system, in our psyche that,

oh, you have to compete in order to prove yourself, and succeeding in competition only means that how much money you have. So, the goal is wrong now, that's where we are, we are all, it's messed up. ...Now look, as much as I try to be a philosopher, but I'm not, I'm a businessman... (P#30)

Some participants spoke to superiority through domination and exploitation, and while the following passage may appear to discount the peoples that inhabited this land before European colonization, they were speaking from the lens of our contemporary lifestyles versus subsistence way of life before colonization:

Why is Texas growing? It's unlivable by all humans, in human history so far, it's been an unlivable land. That's why nobody goes there. Without air-conditioning and cheap electricity and plumbing in those areas, you couldn't live off the land. It was inhospitable to humans. But our technology has reached a level where we have beat these barriers of inhospitality and now that's reversing because the farther, we move West the more we realize that it still doesn't like us to be there. It's not our land. It's not human land. Human population, they never settled there for that reason because it didn't make any sense. (P#3)

Superiority was also conveyed through the West/non-West dichotomy, such as the West being able to enjoy its success on the backs of the non-West or changing the narrative to blame the non-West for problems created by the West:

But really, anyone who enjoys the benefits of living in a first world economy, you have to think of these developing countries, because your largess has been on the backs of it. So, I don't judge or find fault with any of these countries that are burning vast amounts of fossil fuel...Again, I don't like to have these, you know, moral frameworks. ...during the post-colonial era of the 50s and 60s in Asia and Africa, most of these countries were intentionally held back. ...they were excluded from a lot of these multilevel trade agreements. And it's really only been recently, in my own opinion, probably, from the early 90s. But, really, only from the late 90s that they've been able to move forward. (P#16)

Insane amount of packaging which could be saved. Insane amount of food which is wasted. Absolute crazy consumerism, materialism, biggest gas guzzler they need to buy. Just it boggles your mind. And North America in general is the biggest polluter on the planet. We use the most amount of water every day, we use the most amount of food and waste food every day. We just gobble everything and think nothing of it. And then we try to point fingers at India and China 'You guys are not doing anything about climate change.' (P#24)

3.5.6 Power

The discourse of power is created through the hegemonic systems of how some owner-managers perceive themselves in speaking about sustainability discourse and practice. P#20 shared:

...if I take my family, my wife and myself will be more conscious of the environment because we came from a different world, we see how things are working here, so we recycle all those things. But the kids over here, Canadian kids, they are born here, so their way of thinking – they may be advanced – but their way of thinking is totally different from the parents.

This comment can be interpreted in multiple ways. For instance, one interpretation of P#20's comment is that they see themselves as less advanced than those born in the West. Another interpretation may suggest they perceive themselves as more environmentally conscious than their Western counterparts, and perhaps see themselves as advanced in a different way.

Additionally, while most of the participants appeared comfortable and confident in sharing their perspectives and knowledge, a few would say "I'm not sure" before or after their response. Again, this could be due to multiple reasons such as not understanding the question, language or communication barriers, not wanting to be perceived as disagreeable, expressing humility, or perhaps a genuine lack of knowledge. However, two respondents did not think they were qualified to speak about environmental topics even if it was just their perspective, citing a lack of sustainability education, even if they otherwise exhibited a solid understanding. For example, P#7 (a food packaging manufacturer) is one of the five participants who did not answer the question *What does sustainability mean to you* and also expressed that they were unable to comment on environmental topics because they never "studied this". Later in the interview, P#7 spoke of the unsustainability of paper food packaging, which is generally regarded as a more environmentally friendlier option:

People cut trees, then use so many chemicals to bleach it. And then you have to coat it with plastic to put something in it. So, it's still hard to recycle, it's not compostable. Because it's laminated with plastic. For food industry, you have to laminate with plastic [to make the packaging strong enough].

P#7 went on to relate a story about one of their customer's CSR efforts, a MNC:

*All the companies have different ideas [on sustainability]. [MNC] three years ago they came up with the idea they need 30% potato-based material mixed with the plastic [packaging]. It lasted only one year. Because mixing with plastic you cannot compost potatoes either. **That was a bad idea, but [MNC] said we have to do it, so we did.** ... Public opinion, you know, they think their customer base will like it.*

Despite knowing this mixed packaging was not a good or sustainable idea, P#7 did not speak up, which again could be due to multiple reasons such as losing a client/business, cultural norms, language or communication barriers, comfort, or confidence in speaking up, all of which speaks issues to power. Similarly, P#27 also expressed not being comfortable bringing up sustainable options to their customers (it is worth mentioning that while P#7 is an older gentleman born and educated outside of Canada, P#27 is a young man born and educated in Canada):

...any time I interact with a customer ... we're trying to build our relationship or we're trying to make them happy or happier. You never want to say something that they're going to not like. You know, you don't even want to suggest it. You don't want the conversation to feel like that. Right? You always want it to be happy and light and friendly. So, you're very careful of what you bring up to customers because you have a certain mood and a certain – and it's – you're careful with the things that you recommend because we're always trying to recommend things that are going to help grow the business versus you know, reduce our environmental footprint.

3.5.7 Paradoxical (Capitalism-Sustainability)

Many of the conversations spoke directly and indirectly to the incompatibility of sustainability in a capitalistic society that encourages overconsumption and economic growth:

So implementing climate change, a fake answer, everybody wants to do it. Real answer, nobody can do it. We just don't have the bandwidth or the money to do it right now. (P#17)

I would argue that the growth mechanism is part of the problem. ... the difference in the word growth versus evolution to me is huge because I think I'm so trained being in a capitalist society that growth means upward trajectory versus evolution is just progress. (P#18)

But I mean obviously, the capitalist view is we have to keep consuming to continue to grow but, at the same time, that's unsustainable and there's no real understanding between the government and corporations as to how that's going to look. So, you know, the idea that we're going to continue to grow and consume while trying to be sustainable seems to be an oxymoron that no one is willing to fight head-on, at least from the political point of view and I think that one it's going to be a hard one to win over. (P#28)

The contradictions were also expressed by speaking of the inauthentic and ineffective sustainability/CSR responses by government and business:

... a lot of companies, they advertise a Canadian-made product, but their product is not Canadian-made. They just get their products made in China, they get them

brought here and then they sort. So, they sort the parts here and then they can look as if it's Canadian-made. I think things like this need to be cracked down on so that [it is] fair ... We don't mind paying a little bit extra to be more environmentally friendly, but we just don't know [who to trust or what to do]" (P#11)

Several respondents also mentioned how electric vehicles (EVs) are promoted as a solution to curb climate change, but their sustainability was questioned such as the source of electricity, the source materials to make the batteries, how the materials are extracted, and the longevity and disposal of the batteries, all of which has an environmental impact. An interesting finding within this discourse is that many of the participants associated the inauthenticity and hypocrisy primarily with governments and not necessarily with business.

Additionally, an internalized hypocrisy was also detected in this discourse. For example, P#3 provided passionate and detailed responses to most of the questions, which were critical of what constitutes eurocentric sustainability yet stated climate change “means absolutely nothing because again, am I going to stop using my laptop? Am I going to stop driving a car? Am I going to become a monk and live out in the forest ...” expressing what could be considered as an internalized paradox, benefitting from the very systems that create unsustainability.

3.5.8 Pessimism

Only two owner-managers had an optimistic outlook about climate change and that human ingenuity could solve our sustainability and climate problems. Most respondents had pessimistic views about climate change that were conveyed through words such as ‘bomb’, ‘doomsday’, ‘destruction’, ‘crisis’, and something beyond their control. The pessimism discourse is also created through ideas about the lack of progress, political will, and meaningful action “I feel like it’s not getting any better... I feel like there’s a lot more talk and less action taking place” (P#26).

The discourse was further shaped by disappointment and frustration, particularly around the idea of ‘waiting until it is too late’ such as P#13 who shared that resources are destructively exploited, and attention is only paid when they are showing signs of degradation. The pessimism discourse is also imbued by perceptions of inadequate responses to environmental and climate issues:

I have a very pessimistic view on the environment. I think we are not going to be able to reach the goals that have been set and we are now at the point where we are going over the edge... We are not going to act until it is too late, that's the problem. We do not have the political power or resolve to do what is needed. (P#23)

A couple of participants, who interestingly were the youngest, expressed another manifestation of pessimism, apathy, such as P#29:

Honestly, it [climate change] doesn't mean much. Like I've heard that word thrown around my entire life and heard so many contradicting opinions. It's just a thing that like I'm pretty sure it happens and I'm pretty sure it's real and I think it's a bad thing and we should do more about it, but people just seem to have – like can never be on the same page, there's so much controversy. It's just a thing. Like, it doesn't affect me directly because to me it feels like it's a bigger thing than I could ever control.

3.6 Discussion, Implications & Future Research

The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of how the sustainability discourse, which includes climate, is perceived by diverse SME owner-managers, the implication these perceptions have for action, and the role spirituality plays in these understandings. Contrary to academic and mainstream literature and practice that perceives sustainability through the three-pillar paradigm, this study shows that this conception is not universal. For instance, five of the owner-managers were not familiar with the word sustainability and none of the participants indicated familiarity with the three-pillar concept. This is an important finding since sustainability is not just an academic construct but also a business function, most notably through CSR, and is the dominant paradigm used to frame sustainability discourse (Patara & Dhalla, 2022). More importantly, participants have sophisticated understandings of the *idea* of sustainability that may not be reflective of the language and ideas in the Western canon. Of the respondents who provided an answer as to what sustainability meant to them, 55% mentioned environmental dimensions and in all cases, it was in generalities such as “less damage to the environment” (P#15). Most of the responses on sustainability focused on the social dimensions, particularly around future generations, and business longevity whereas discussions on climate change focused primarily on the environmental dimensions.

Of the eight discourses that emerged from the analysis, interdependency, social, longevity, and responsibility reveal a collectivist-interdependence framing in how climate and sustainability discourses are perceived and understood, which is examined in Section 3.6.1. Whereas the superiority, paradoxical, pessimism, and power discourses are reactions to eurocentric sustainability and reflect features of individualism and eurocentrism, which may have an influential role for (in)action, discussed in Section 3.6.2. The role of spirituality in these understandings is explored in Section 3.6.3.

3.6.1 Perceptions of Sustainability and Climate Discourse

Many of the owner-managers spoke of sustainability using the interdependency discourse by drawing linkages to the ideas of balance, equilibrium, and harmony in which several participants used the Mother Earth/Nature idiom. This framing sees continuity and interdependency among humans, nature, and non-human beings and that these systems are permeable and aspects of a totality in which nature has intrinsic value (Norde, 1997; Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019; Hwang, 2020; Ramirez, 2021). Moreover, they share similar threads to other cosmovisions that have an “inherent biocentric value orientation” (van Norren 2020, p. 431), suggesting epistemological and cosmological differences (Mignolo, 2018). This may help to explain why many respondents had difficulty articulating what sustainability means to them or in some cases outright rejected the idea. Further many of the study’s participants do not have a compartmentalized conceptualization of sustainability that is commonly embodied through the three-pillar approach because just like how “human life is not compartmentalised” (P. K. Nayak & Pradhan, 2023, p. 205) neither is sustainability. This interpretation, which is not just inferred by the researcher but also made explicit by some of the participants, suggests that sustainability is innate and interwoven in every aspect of life; it is a given that does not require explicit language or definition. If every faction of life fits into one of the three pillars, what does not constitute sustainability? If the answer is nothing, then why have the word sustainability? The relevance of this finding is that it challenges both the efficacy and logic of the three-pillar conception of sustainability.

Sustainability, including climate change, was also spoken through the social discourse, which speaks to intergenerational inequity – the lack of justice and fairness for future generations who are anticipated to be deprived of their needs due to the actions of current and past generations (Sikdar, 2003), which subsumes a collectivist framing that speaks to interdependency, community welfare and supporting others (Ogihara & Uchida, 2014; Krassner et al., 2017). Those who spoke to the economic dimensions did so mainly by referring to the continuity or longevity of their products and business (Aras & Crowther, 2009) though some respondents put this in the context of the environment, which is also reflective of collectivism (Wood, 2020; Hunt, 2021). The longevity discourse not only highlights the ability and agility of SMEs to adapt to known and unknown changes (Taneja et al., 2016) but also that these are growing and/or ongoing concerns for SMEs that sustainability leaders and governments need to be able to respond to (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009), particularly as SMEs operate at different temporal scales compared to large businesses.

Given that sustainability is not universal or prescriptive (Banerjee, 2011), there is an imperative to continue further empirical inquiry that adds to the sustainability pluriverse by adding to, complementing, coevolving, coexisting, or perhaps challenging or contesting the sustainability discourse (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This includes other ways pluriversity research can be approached, including the interplay of collectivism-individualism and sustainability scholarship.

3.6.2 Implications for Action

The study found the collectivist framings of sustainability and climate expressed by interviewees in the first four discourses are juxtaposed to the last four, which are perceptions and reactions to eurocentric sustainability and are enmeshed with features of individualism and eurocentrism, particularly the superiority discourse. For example, many of the participants expressed frustration when they related their perspectives on, and experiences with eurocentric sustainability, particularly around overconsumption (Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020), greed (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019), never being satisfied (Wood, 2020), competitiveness (Komlosy, 2021), addiction to comfort and convenience (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019), the domination and exploitation of nature (Norde, 1997), as well as the exploitation of non-Western people and countries (Drebes, 2014; Adams et al., 2018). The study's findings also illuminate hidden and unhidden power asymmetries that force dominant ways of knowing and doing (Foucault, 1972), such as applying prescriptive and generalized approaches to sustainability. Not only are these ideas linked to individualism but eurocentrism more broadly.

One example that exemplifies the last four discourses is P#7 and the failed potato-based packaging; P#7 knew it “was a bad idea, but [the MNC] said *we have to do it, so we did*” – could the outcome have been better had the MNC entered the conversation with P#7 and viewed them as packaging experts and communicated their objectives rather than coming in as the experts and making demands? Perhaps. More importantly, it is an exemplar of how eurocentrism pervades the sustainability discourse and practice, which may lead some to doubt or devalue their perspectives and knowledge in place of knowledge produced by Western people and/or standards that are deemed to be superior to theirs (Karodia & Soni, 2014; Wijesinghe et al., 2019). Despite their experience and expertise, some SME owner-managers may not feel comfortable challenging dominant sustainability narratives due to power differentials, which ultimately serve to perpetuate status quo outcomes (Feygina, 2013).

These four discourses paired with perceptions of inauthentic and inept responses to sustainability issues not only fuel skepticism and distrust for many of the participants but also shape negative perceptions of sustainability and CSR. The implications of this are critical, not because it may result in inaction but because the lack of action may be misconstrued as a lack of engagement, motivation, knowledge, or resources when it has more to do with the unwillingness to engage in eurocentric sustainability, which many participants perceive as maladaptive. This issue could be subverted if experts and leaders (by title, education, or experience) not come into conversations as the only experts or holders of knowledge but rather be open to a plurality of perspectives that may contradict their knowledge and ways of knowing. Thus, future studies may want to consider exploring eurocentric sustainability using different considerations such as industries and geographies.

3.6.3 Role of Spirituality and Culture

The study's findings show that 82% of respondents indicated some connection to spirituality or religion, either explicitly or implicitly, which is unsurprising as some form of spiritual or religious faith is observed by more than half of the world's population (D. Sharma et al., 2023). For many of the study's participants, spirituality is unique, intimate, and innate, usually involving the idea of something bigger than oneself that guides and informs one's understanding of the world (nature, life, and death) (Del Rio & White, 2012; Viswanathan, 2014), which ultimately shapes their discourses on sustainability and nature.

This study also illuminates several common threads between spirituality and sustainability such as interdependence and balance, suggesting that spirituality is key to informing and shaping ethics and values and therefore, our motivations, such as cultivating generosity, compassion (instead of self-interest), and cooperation (rather than competition) (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019), and thus, why spirituality needs to be part of the sustainability discourse (Gray, 2010). The sustainability-spirituality connection is relevant as humans are losing meaningful connections not only with nature but others, only to be replaced by capitalism that serves an industrial society, intensifying unsustainability and the 'nature-culture' divide (Banerjee, 2003; Feygina, 2013), particularly as social wellbeing is a central part of sustainability (P. K. Nayak & Pradhan, 2023).

The findings also empirically validate that spirituality should not be conflated with religion or religiosity, as suggested by Del Rio and White (2012), particularly as several participants appeared to distance themselves from religion and spirituality despite sharing anecdotes that suggest it plays a

role in influencing their perceptions on sustainability. There could be several explanations for this, such as a negative connotation with religiosity and in turn, spirituality, which may be more of a concern for those who see religion-making as a weapon to incite conflict or those who view religion with conflict (Mandair, 2009). Negative views of religion (and in turn spirituality) are also a by-product of eurocentrism and modernity, which seeks to replace ideas of God and spirituality with science as universal truths (Wallerstein, 1997). Therefore, one of the contributions of this paper is not only to dissuade researchers from continuing to conflate religion and spirituality (Del Rio & White, 2012) but also to highlight future research avenues that empirically explore the interplay of sustainability and spirituality. However, this recommendation comes with three important caveats. First, scholarly work in spirituality has been dominated by eurocentric epistemologies and constructs, which are used to (inadequately) understand non-Western cultures, philosophies, and spiritual traditions, leading to simplistic, distorted, and flattened views and understandings (Mandair, 2009; Hwang, 2020; Ojha & Venkateswaran, 2022).

The second call for care in pursuing this stream of research is that there has been recent interest and uptake of ‘mindfulness’ both in scholarship and practice (e.g., *mindfulness at work*), which heavily borrows from Buddhist traditions yet any mention of Buddhism has been stripped, allowing for only a partial and incomplete understanding (Dhaka et al., 2022). This may be done to make mindfulness more attractive to a diverse range of employees, but this has negative consequences. First, it does not credit the philosophies it ‘borrows’ from; rather scholars and practitioners are claiming to discover these findings as new knowledge (Datta, 2018). Second, “commercial mindfulness practices” do not integrate moral principles and are often pursued for the organization’s corporate self-interests rather than their employees’ well-being and development, which is counter to Buddhist traditions (Dhaka et al., 2022, p.4).

The third caveat is that when spirituality (Dhaka et al., 2022), like sustainability, is pursued for financial or corporate benefit (commodification and exploitation), it tends to lead to ineffective outcomes because the underlying motive is out of self-interest (individualist) rather than communal benefit (collectivist) or the ethical thing to do – in other words, it is inauthentic.

If these pitfalls can be avoided or at least minimized, pursuing sustainability through spirituality can be one of the few transformative changes to veer off our current trajectory of status quo, as it encourages shifting mindsets to see the universe as a totality (cosmology), as well as different ways of

thinking, knowing, and doing (pluriversality) and how the world is understood (gnoseology) (Mignolo, 2018). Yet this path is also the most difficult because not only is it intangible, but it also requires a mindset change that includes unlearning and detaching from the maxim of profit maximization and overconsumption, which encourages deriving worth from the material world and towards an ethos that respects nature and people (i.e., seeing the universe as a totality).

It is also challenging from a policymaking and cultural perspective, particularly in the West which strives for secularism. Interestingly, Holland (2020) argues secularism, atheism, and agnosticism are Christian ideas but people do not recognize them as such. In other words, the same mindset used to spread Christianity is the same mindset used to reject it, which is the thesis of this study, the mindset that creates unsustainability, is the same mindset used to solve it (Prádanos, 2013). Therefore, there needs to be public will and practice before there can be political will and action.

Finally, spirituality should not be conflated with or based on eurocentric ideas of religion. Just like sustainability means different things to different people, spirituality also means different things to different people hence, the criticality of a pluriversality approach (Mignolo, 2018). Integrating spirituality within sustainability management does not need to involve God or religion but rather the principles of moderation, non-duality, and no-self (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019) and the understanding we are all connected and part of the cosmos, not rulers of it, which is crucial to policy.

3.7 Conclusion

The sustainability and climate discourse have largely been conceived, framed, and perpetuated by eurocentric epistemologies despite sustainability and climate issues being both global and localized phenomena and therefore, need to be addressed through a pluriversality approach that not only takes into consideration what these discourses mean to diverse groups of people, particularly those whose voices have traditionally been excluded but different ways of thinking, knowing, and doing. This study sought to understand how the climate and sustainability discourses are perceived by diverse SME owner-managers, the implications these understandings have for action, and the role of spirituality in these discourses.

Eight discourses surfaced, each revealing a distinct way of thinking and speaking about climate and sustainability. The discourses of *interdependency* (how all things, living and non-living, are interconnected), *social* (particularly the ability of future cohorts to meet their needs), *longevity* (the

continuity, stability, and adaptability of business and livelihoods), and *responsibility* present a collectivist framing.

The discourse of *superiority* speaks to things such as overconsumption, greed, never being satisfied, competitiveness, addiction to comfort and convenience, and thinking we are advanced. The *power* discourse speaks to the hegemonic asymmetries that impose dominant ways of thinking, knowing, and doing, such as applying prescriptive and generalized approaches to sustainability that may devalue the perspectives and knowledge that are not congruent to knowledge produced by Western standards. The *paradoxical* discourse expresses the incompatibility of sustainability and capitalism and the *pessimism* discourse largely speaks to the perceived lack of action and progress. The implications of these last four discourses are that it may lead to a lack of action, but the real concern is that this inaction may be misinterpreted as a lack of engagement, motivation, knowledge, or resources when it is more likely the lack of engagement in eurocentric sustainability, particularly when it is perceived to produce maladaptive consequences. Further, many spoke of sustainability through spirituality, imbuing ideas of interdependency and connectedness that are not found in sustainability management.

A key contribution of this study is that not only does sustainability mean different things to different people, but that knowledge comes in different forms. The policy and practical implications of this study illuminate that sustainability practitioners and leaders not come into the conversation as the only knowledge holders and take into consideration diverse perspectives, as well as different ways of understanding and communicating, including language use. To effectively solve our sustainability problems, we must be open and accepting of new ways of thinking, knowing, doing, and being that are outside of eurocentric models. One crucial way is challenging eurocentric sustainability, which views nature as a commodity, and therefore, responses to sustainability continue to be entrenched in capitalistic principles of competition, individualism, profit maximization, and maintaining and bolstering lifestyles of overconsumption.

Chapter 4

The motivators, enablers, and barriers to pursuing climate and environmental action for diverse small and medium-sized business owner-managers

4.1 Abstract

Given the collective high environmental impact of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), studies have begun investigating their engagement in environmental sustainability. However, this scholarship lacks plurality, as it mostly draws on Western perspectives. This empirical study seeks to address this gap by exploring what motivates, supports, and limits diverse SME owner-managers in pursuing environmental action. Findings show most respondents show concern for sustainability issues and see their role as minimizing environmental harm often grounded by a culture of “no-waste”. Outwardly, the biggest enablers and barriers are related to financial considerations. However, a deeper examination reveals that the inauthenticity of sustainability practices by customers, suppliers, and governments also creates cynicism and distrust, shaping attitudes, and engagement in environmental action. The more profound implication is that this inaction may be misconstrued as a lack of motivation or capacity when it is more likely a reluctance to engage in inauthentic sustainability.

Keywords: sustainability; SMEs; CSR; plurality

4.2 Introduction

Many of the world’s sustainability challenges are attributed to the adverse impacts caused by business under capitalism (referred to as business herein) that are not factored into their internal costs but passed onto external stakeholders (Hertwich, 2005). As a result, business is held most responsible for many of the world’s sustainability problems (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Nollet et al., 2016). The focus tends to land on large corporations, even though small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 90% of businesses in most world economies and collectively account for not only 70% of total employment but also 70% of global pollution (Koirala, 2018; 2019; World Economic Forum, 2021). These figures underscore the importance of ensuring that SMEs are not only engaged but actively moving towards reducing their environmental impact.

While there have been several studies investigating the environmental impact of SMEs, including the values, motivations, and perceptions of owner-managers in engaging in environmental action (e.g., Brammer et al., 2012; Williams & Schaefer, 2013; Lewis et al., 2015; Sáez-Martínez et al., 2016; Schaefer et al., 2020), mainstream scholarship largely draws on Western perspectives whereby perspectives from diverse SME owner-managers, such as those with family origins from the non-West are mostly absent (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014).

In this study, Western refers to European societies, people, and countries, as well as descendants from European societies that live in colonized lands. Non-Western refers to Asian, African, Latin American, and Caribbean countries and peoples; descendants from these regions living elsewhere; and indigenous peoples of Western countries that were colonized by Europeans. It is acknowledged that the binary nature of these terms are limited and contentious, however, the intention is solely to describe how these terms are used in this study in the absence of terms that do not have shortcomings.

SME scholarship that may consider intersectionality such as race and gender is generally limited to minority, ethnic, and immigrant entrepreneurship, which largely emerged due to disparities faced by entrepreneurs from non-dominant groups (Chaganti & Greene, 2002). However, theories to explain these disparities are often through Western epistemology and hermeneutics and predominately by Western scholars (Teixeira et al., 2007). Pluriversality is an approach to pursuing knowledge and meaning outside the confines of Western epistemology and hermeneutics but does not deny Western perspectives or approaches, as all have the right to coexist in the pluriverse of meaning (Mignolo, 2018). In other words, pluriversality can add to or complement existing perspectives, or it could express as challenging or contesting extant viewpoints (Mignolo, 2018). Further, Western approaches to research often generalize and theorize phenomena so that theories and knowledge created in one setting or one group can be applied to others (Sabaratnam, 2013). This tends to lead to ill-informed or inaccurate accounts, as knowledge is created by individuals who are influenced by their localized contexts, geographies, and worldviews, and thus, knowledge cannot be universalized, which calls for a pluriversality approach to research (Mignolo, 2011; 2018).

As SME-sustainability scholarship predominately draws on Western perspectives, the motivators, enablers, and barriers for ethnically diverse SME owner-managers pursuing environmental initiatives are not well understood. Therefore, this empirical study investigates what motivates, enables, and hinders diverse SME owner-managers in pursuing environmental action. This study does not

generalize or theorize these findings for other groups or contexts, however, the relevance of gaining these perspectives is threefold 1) Western countries heavily rely on immigration from non-Western countries to meet their population and economic goals (Flanagan, 2020); 2) immigrants disproportionately represent self-employment in Western countries (Abada et al., 2012; Picot & Ostrovsky, 2021); 3) sustainability issues continue to worsen (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2021) despite the proliferation of discourse and practice that falls under the canopy of sustainability management over the past five decades (ElAlfy et al., 2020), signaling the need for approaching sustainability through other ways of knowing, thinking, and doing (i.e., pluriversality).

4.3 Literature Review of SME Sustainability

It is generally understood that sustainability issues are not just confined to the biophysical world that supports all life forms as the purveyor of sustenance; it includes social and economic features such as inequalities and injustices, which has led to the compartmentalized view of sustainability into the three pillars of social, environmental, and economic (Purvis et al., 2019). CSR can be described as the voluntary actions of a firm to integrate sustainability into its business strategy (Demssie et al., 2019), which tends to operate at a scale for larger enterprises than SMEs (Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015).

The environmental dimensions for a business may include strategies focused on minimizing pollution and waste; increasing the efficiency and longevity of products; improving disposal of products; and committing less environmental harm (Hart, 1995; Amankwah-Amoah & Syllias, 2020).

Environmental responsibility typically refers to compliance with laws and regulations; involuntary responses due to public pressure; and voluntary or proactive measures and strategies (Hörisch et al., 2015). Social aspects of sustainability include adequate living wages and safe working conditions; the economic pillar includes features such as “smart” or “green” growth (Patara & Dhalla, 2022).

While attention tends to be more focused on large businesses, estimates reveal that SMEs are collectively responsible for 70% of global pollution (Hörisch et al., 2015). Yet, studies also suggest that SMEs tend to believe their environmental impact is negligible or are unaware of their impact and therefore, are often portrayed as laggards; however, this view limits opportunities for SME engagement (Revell et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2015; Kiefhaber et al., 2020; Belas et al., 2021). The subsequent sections review the extant literature on the key motivators, enablers, and barriers for SMEs in pursuing environmental action, and concludes with a discussion on plurality within SME scholarship.

4.3.1 Motivators

Earlier studies presented SMEs as miniature versions of large businesses whereby the findings established for big corporations (e.g. theories, standards, and frameworks) were generalized for SMEs (Battisti & Perry, 2011). However, it is well established that SMEs are drastically distinct from their larger counterparts, particularly when it comes to pursuing environmental action. For example, while not mutually exclusive, SMEs' motivations are strongly influenced by owner-managers' values and attitudes whereas large firms tend to be more motivated by external pressures (Hammann et al., 2009; Battisti & Perry, 2011; Brammer et al., 2012; Chassé & Courrent, 2018; Cantele and Zardini, 2020; Schaefer et al., 2020). SMEs also vary greatly across industries, geographies, ownership arrangements, and cultures and therefore, cannot be treated as a homogeneous group (Williams and Schaefer, 2013; Koirala, 2018; 2019). Nevertheless, whether small or large, a firm's motivations for engaging in environmental action tend to fall into one of three categories – competitiveness (developing eco resources and capabilities), legitimation (regulation and stakeholder pressure), and values (responsibility to be eco-conscious) (Bansal & Roth, 2000).

SMEs can also be portrayed as unmotivated, unreceptive, disengaged, and/or seeing little value in pursuing environmental initiatives (Fassin, 2008; Battisti & Perry, 2011; Brammer et al., 2012; Hörisch et al., 2015). Several reasons are attributed to this characterization, such as SMEs' lower profiles and exposure compared to big corporations (Battisti & Perry, 2011) whereas larger corporations are more motivated by external pressures, such as maintaining and enhancing their public image and reducing reputational risk, and thus, expend more resources to enhance their legitimacy (ElAlfy et al., 2020). This oversimplified portrayal deserves more nuance, particularly in terms of owner-manager attitudes and behaviors (Battisti & Perry, 2011), which is further explored under enablers and barriers. For example, there is a newer category of SMEs referred to as sustainability-orientated enterprises (or ecopreneurs) that have more interest in the quality of their business growth than the quantity of growth and see themselves as agents for social change (Williams & Schaefer, 2013). As such, literature suggests there is a need to shift away from economic motivators to drive sustainability engagement in SMEs and towards ones that more directly speak to social dimensions (Belas et al., 2021).

4.3.2 Enablers

Literature points to several enablers that may support and motivate SMEs in pursuing environmental initiatives. SME owner-managers tend to have more autonomy when it comes to decision-making compared to managers in large organizations (Hammann et al., 2009; Wiesner et al., 2018). They also have more informal structures with less procedural bureaucracy than larger firms, allowing them to be more flexible and adaptable and thus, respond more swiftly (Fassin, 2008; Sáez-Martínez et al., 2016). SMEs also possess important internal resources such as technical expertise and knowledge. Their engagement in environmental action is said to improve product quality and efficiency, as well as stakeholder and community relations, and in turn, enhances firm competitiveness (Revell et al., 2010). Literature also suggests cultivating collaborative relationships with stakeholders may be an enabling mechanism, such as opening or enhancing access to financial and social capital (Brammer et al., 2012; Lewis et al. 2015). In particular, employees are cited as one of the most critical stakeholder groups for the success of SMEs (Hammann et al., 2009).

Larger organizations are considered to more easily engage in environmental initiatives due to greater 'slack' resources such as knowledge that SMEs often do not have (Amankwah-Amoah & Syllias, 2020; Barbosa et al., 2020). For example, larger firms may create a sustainability department to maintain their competitive advantage, which requires knowledge and acquisition of sustainability management tools (Hörisch et al., 2015). To compete without the slack resources of larger firms, some scholars suggest that SMEs enhance their knowledge of sustainability management so that sustainability is integrated into their operations and that they consult external resources to compensate for lacking internal resources (Hörisch et al., 2015). Finally, financial and tax incentives are also essential enablers for driving environmental action (Koirala, 2019).

4.3.3 Barriers

SMEs encounter various challenges that may pose barriers to pursuing environmental action. As mentioned, SMEs typically do not have dedicated (slack) resources to pursue environmental initiatives such as staff, knowledge, training, funds, or time (Fassin, 2008; Amankwah-Amoah & Syllias, 2020; Barbosa et al., 2020). Environmental regulations may be more onerous for SMEs compared to larger businesses in which the former is characterized as being focused on routine activities and thus, sustainability falls out of scope (Brammer et al., 2012). SMEs are also portrayed

as being unable to see or estimate the cost-benefits of pursuing environmental initiatives, particularly if there are substantial upfront costs that will not be realized right away (Brammer et al., 2012).

Some studies report that SMEs' views on environmental and climate issues are based on a variety of sources, particularly popular media and that some owner-managers are skeptical about climate change science (Williams & Schaefer, 2013). Additionally, some SMEs tend to hold governments more accountable for environmental management, such as determining acceptable levels of environmental performance yet, they can be unfamiliar with environmental policies that apply to them or in some cases deliberately abdicate them (Lewis et al., 2015). Further, institutions and officials tend to neglect SMEs regarding environmental policies, as it is assumed that findings from large firms can be extrapolated to SMEs (Fassin, 2008) in which SMEs are treated as a homogeneous group (Williams and Schaefer, 2013). Finally, policy actors typically do not offer SMEs adequate incentives to support their sustainability initiatives.

4.3.4 Plurality

Much of mainstream SME scholarship tends to draw from Western perspectives whereas non-Western perspectives, including owner-managers living in Western countries, are not well understood (Essers & Tedmanson, 2014). SME scholarships that examine issues of intersectionality such as race and gender are generally limited to ethnic, minority, and immigrant entrepreneurship (Chaganti & Greene, 2002). A common thread among these scholarships is that they typically examine disparities experienced by non-dominant groups, particularly issues of earning disparities and economic (im)mobility, which are often related to race, language (Nakhaie, 2015), and gender (Raimi et al., 2023). For example, immigrants from non-native English-speaking countries not only have more difficulty securing paid employment due to language barriers and accents but their experience, education, and credentials are not valued or recognized by Western institutions and countries and thus, they are 'pushed' into self-employment (Li, 2000a; Frenette, 2004; Maitra, 2017).

Historically, ethnic entrepreneurs regardless if they are native or foreign-born, earn substantially less than white entrepreneurs (Li, 1997, 2000b). Theories to explain these disparities such as block-mobility have mostly been developed through Western epistemology (Teixeira et al., 2007). For example, studies that focus on race or ethnicity to make comparisons with white entrepreneurs have largely been inconclusive according to Nakhaie (2015) because they treat ethnic groups as a homogenous group without proper treatment of other factors.

Given that ethnic, minority, and immigrant entrepreneurship are generally dedicated to examining issues of disparities, are highly nuanced, and have established meaning and context, this study does not use these terms and instead refers to *diverse owner-managers*, specifically whose family origins are from a non-Western country regardless of where they were born. The prime justification for this is that this study aims to contribute to SME scholarship on sustainability, which lacks plurality, and thus, perspectives from non-Western peoples should be included in mainstream literature rather than be relegated to niche categories. This study seeks to understand *the motivators, enablers, and barriers for diverse SME owner-managers in Ontario, Canada's manufacturing sector in pursuing environmental action*.

Understanding perspectives from non-Western peoples is significant as immigrants, particularly from non-Western nations, disproportionately represent self-employment in Western countries (Abada et al., 2012; Picot & Ostrovsky, 2021). Therefore, it is important to understand the perspectives of a broader range of SME owners, particularly as there are extensive studies that show SMEs' levels of engagement in environmental action are highly influenced by the owner-managers' values and attitudes (Brammer et al., 2012; Hammann et al., 2009; Schaefer et al., 2020). Thus, a plurality of perspectives in SME and sustainability scholarships need to be part of the conversation, a gap that this study addresses.

4.4 Methods

The following section describes the sampling, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods employed in the study.

4.4.1 Sampling & Recruitment

Four criteria were developed for the sample selection. As SMEs are the most conventional form of business in Canada and contribute to 88% of the country's employment (Government of Canada, 2022), the first criterion is that the business is an SME (less than 500 employees). The second condition is the SME operates in the manufacturing sector based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 31-33. The rationale is that despite its large impact, for example, in Ontario, the manufacturing sector contributes to 23% of the province's GHG emissions (Government of Canada, 2021), the manufacturing industry tends to receive limited attention (Gibson-Graham et al., 2019). Due to the lack of plurality in SME-sustainability scholarship, the

third criterion is that the owner-manager self-identifies as a person of color (PoC), a proxy for non-Western. Given that this research uses a pluriversality approach and does not seek to generalize or theorize the findings or have them applied to other contexts, there is minimal risk that different ethnic groups are treated as one homogenous group in this study – it simply presents their perspectives. The fourth condition is the business is located in Ontario, Canada, as the province is home to the highest number of SMEs (37%) (Government of Canada, 2022) and the second-largest PoC population (29%) in Canada (Government of Ontario, 2023), making it ideal for collecting empirical data.

Respondents were recruited using several methods. The first method used an online resource called the Ontario Business Directory (n.d.) which maintains information on 150,000 Ontario businesses of which 13,701 are listed under manufacturing. This step involved manually going through these listings to determine if the participants met the four criteria and if the business could be contacted electronically (by email or online form) for the initial communication. A total of 391 businesses were contacted using this method, resulting in 22 interviews. The second approach involved identifying gatekeepers that are relevant to the manufacturing industry. Sixteen gatekeepers were contacted and only one known gatekeeper forwarded the invitation to their constituents, however, the number of recipients is not known. This approach resulted in one interview. The third method employed snowball sampling by asking businesses from the first method to forward the invitation to their network, as well as at the end of participant interviews, which yielded no interviews. The fourth technique employed the researcher's network via social media, email, and word-of-mouth, resulting in ten interviews. The outcome was 33 completed interviews; a response rate of 15% and a participation rate of 8%.

4.4.2 Data Collection

The data collection method employed was semi-structured interviews, which are powerful yet flexible research tools for conducting in-depth analysis, especially for identifying emerging issues that may only surface during the interview process (Berg, 2001). The interviews were directed by a list of interview prompts – see Appendix B.

The interviews were conducted with SME owner-managers either online or at their place of business between April and August of 2022, with an average length of 37 minutes. All interviews were recorded with consent and then transcribed before being imported, manually coded, and analyzed using NVivo and Excel software.

Seventy-six percent of the participants are men and 24% are women, with the youngest being 22 and the oldest 83 years of age. Thirty percent of respondents were born in Canada; the other 70% have spent more than half their lives in Canada. Finally, 42% identified English as their native or first language.

4.4.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed for qualitatively analyzing the interview responses, which is regarded as the cornerstone method for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and thus, one of the most popular methods (Snyder, 2019). Thematic analysis is a nuanced, independent, and flexible, approach for identifying, examining, and reporting patterns within the dataset and facilitates the organizing and describing of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematically analyzing data involves developing themes that capture a phenomenon that is then explicated for their broader social meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is not bound to any particular theoretical framework and therefore, critical realism was applied to the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A critical realist approach recognizes how individuals give meaning to their experiences and how broader social contexts impose those meanings (Maxwell, 2012). As a result, thematic analysis lends itself to reflecting reality, as well as disentangling the “surface of reality” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Critical realism suggests that there are varying perspectives of reality while acknowledging that these meanings are imperfect (Maxwell, 2012).

An inductive approach to thematic analysis was applied to identify themes linked to data by following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased approach, which need not be linear but should be iterative. The study began with semantic analysis in which the themes remained close to the participants' responses, leading to more surface-level meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Next, the underlying semantic meanings were examined by applying latent coding, an interpretative treatment implicit to the researcher (Clarke & Braun, 2016). This involved repeated readings of the transcripts to gain familiarity with semantic implications. Codes were generated to capture key meanings relating to the research question through an iterative process after which they were organized so they connect to a theme. The themes were iteratively reviewed, refined, and evaluated within the context of the entire dataset, which involved ensuring they were clear, logical, and distinct. Lastly, the themes were named in a way that constructed a narrative to answer the research question.

As with most qualitative methods, the application of thematic analysis is not bias-free, which Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that in addition to being guided by their research question, the researcher's biases and epistemological positions make it unfeasible to do so. For example, this study is partly based on prior research on enabling and constraining forces for SMEs that is predominately from a Western perspective. As such, there is an underlying assumption that there might be additional findings not found in extant scholarship, hence the need for this study.

Thematic analysis was selected for this study, as it seeks to understand the owner-managers' experiences of what motivates, enables, and challenges them in pursuing environmental action, as well as explicate why factors are enabling or constraining. Thematic analysis was selected, as the aim of the study is to explore individual experiences versus theorizing or generalizing their experiences and to contribute to the plurality of perspectives from people typically excluded.

4.5 Findings

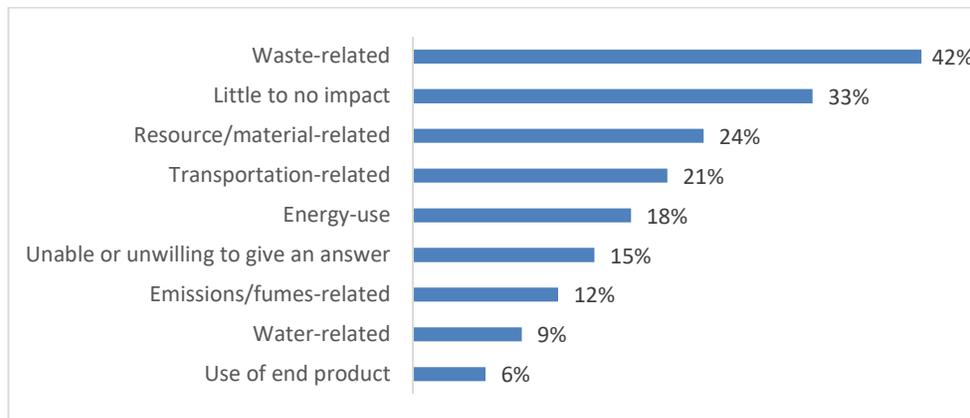
To understand the motivators, enablers, and barriers for diverse SME owner-managers in pursuing environmental action, this section sets the stage by first describing what environmental impact participants (P) thought their business had from supply-chains, manufacturing, transportation, usage, and disposal – the entire value chain. The purpose of the question is to understand what participants believe their business's environmental impact to be, including what aspects they considered.

Forty-two percent mentioned waste and 33% said that their business had little or no impact, especially compared to large corporations, as P#2 explains "...unless large corporations change their footprint, really what are individual pieces going to do?" As a side note, several participants perceived the 'environmental impact' as synonymous with damage, which may be why many answered the question with nothing.

Most of the responses did not consider transportation, energy, or water use when speaking about their environmental impact. When prompted about these aspects, some respondents said that these impacts would be there regardless of business or industry, as expressed by P#24: "...there is always an environmental impact for every type of product." Many of the answers also did not consider their value or supply chain unless prompted. For example, when describing their business operations P#10 indicated "...there's [no] harm to the environment. [It] is safe" but when probed further about the raw materials used, they said, "...actually this is environmentally bad, but they make it in the US, not in Canada" and therefore, believed their impact was negligible. However, most respondents recognize

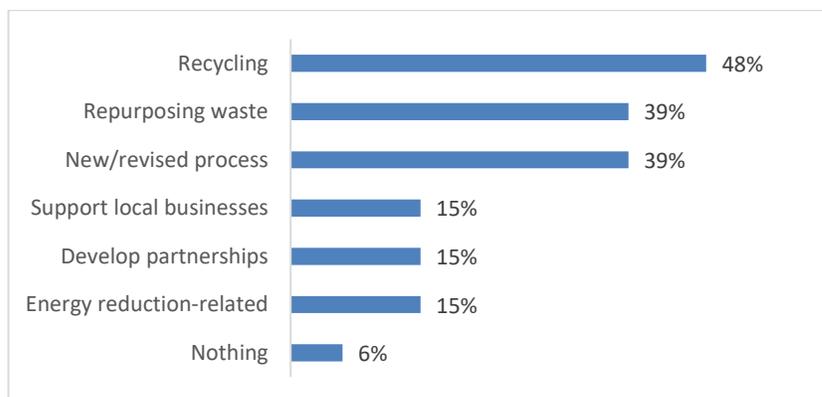
their business has an impact and even though individually it might be small, collectively it accumulates, “I’m a small guy, and what I do is not much, and nothing’s going to happen, let somebody else do their part. But you know what, we can’t think like that. We all have to do our part” (P#5). Figure 9 presents the responses given.

Figure 9: What Owner-Managers Believe Their Environmental Impact is



The follow-up question asked owner-managers if they have taken any action to reduce their business’s environmental impact. Forty-eight percent answered that they recycle (materials that are recycled at another facility); 39% mentioned they reuse or repurpose materials (in-house), including two respondents who indicated their business model is premised on reconditioning or repurposing material; and 39% said they introduced a new process or made a change to an existing process such as using more environmentally friendly products; 15% shared that they have fostered collaborative partnerships (discussed further in Section 4.5.2) – Figure 10 presents the responses given.

Figure 10: Owner-Managers’ Efforts to Reduce Their Environmental Impact



Reusing and not wasting was one of the most common responses given and interestingly, some made explicit references to being an immigrant shop such as P#2:

We re-use everything and I'd say actually as an immigrant shop, and every immigrant shop I've been to, is run to its own detriment, the same way. So, even they have that sustainability understanding where we don't throw things out.

P#4 also shared that most of their employees are immigrants and it is their employees that drive environmental initiatives, not them:

It's not necessarily coming from a place of them [immigrant employees] thinking, 'OK, we need to be more environmentally friendly, we need to make Earth a cleaner place'. It's more the fact that it comes from culturally, how they grew up of never wasting anything, of never throwing anything away, of always reusing. ... It's culturally, they've been taught that don't waste things. You don't throw things away.

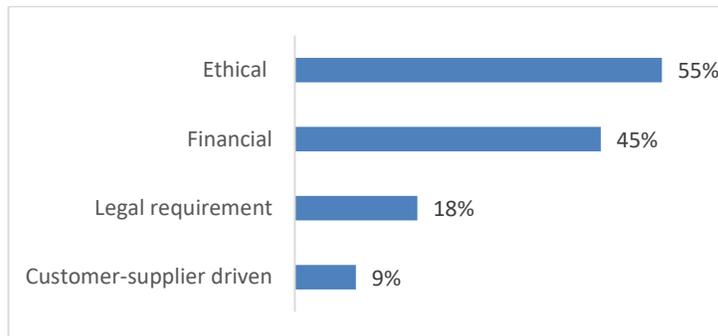
Participants were also asked where they learn about climate change, environmental, and sustainability issues. Seventy-six percent answered with news - mostly from online sources. Thirty-three percent said they receive information from their network (family, friends, coworkers), 9% from documentaries, and 6% from podcasts.

The remainder of this section describes the key themes that emerged in pursuing environmental action, organized by motivators, enablers, and barriers.

4.5.1 Motivators

For owner-managers who pursue environmental initiatives, the two biggest motivators are financial (45%) and ethical (55%) but these are not mutually exclusive, as many stated both financially and ethically motivated justifications. Financial motivations include either saving money or receiving a financial benefit. Ethical persuasions include responses that either said or inferred “it is the right thing to do”; it is “common sense”, for future generations; and for faith-based reasons. Legal requirements (18%) and customer or supplier directives (9%) were also cited – Figure 11 presents the responses given.

Figure 11: Owner-Managers' Motivation for Engaging in Environmental Action



Moreover, several respondents indicated that they have paid more (or are willing to pay more) to reduce their environmental impact, such as purchasing carbon offsets or procuring biodegradable packaging, which is generally more expensive than conventional packaging. P#6 is currently working with a research lab to develop biodegradable personal protection equipment (PPE) and is not only willing to fund the research and development (R&D) out of pocket but to share the technology without being compensated. However, P#6 indicated the scientists they are working with are insisting that the research be funded by the government, which has created delays. When asked what their motivation is, P#6 shared:

Well, because everything we're doing. There's a billion masks that's being disposed of and the creation of pollution. Just look at our ocean. Look at all the plastic bottles. And it's something that's created by man. And we need to find a way and clean it up but we're not.

To delve deeper into the motivations, owner-managers were asked what they think their role is regarding their business's environmental impact and action – Figure 12 presents the responses given. Forty-five percent of owner-managers saw themselves as having a responsibility to minimize their business's environmental impact. Some participants also spoke of social responsibility, such as taking care of their employees:

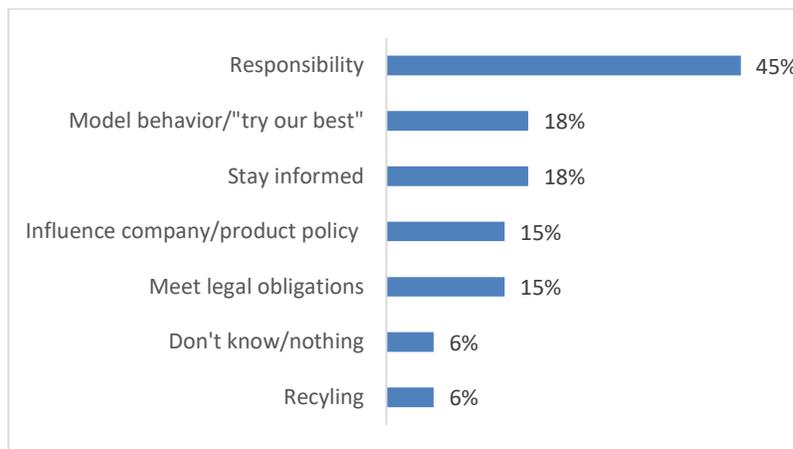
As a business owner, I think our role is to be productive and make money obviously [laughs]. And wanted to take care of our employees, because we're so small we kind of treat it like family, we don't penny pinch, no one's making minimum wage here... (P#2)

...for instance, providing for the family well-being of your workers. You know, you want to make sure that they have a supportive and healthy household, because if they're not happy outside then they're not going to be happy inside. (P#16)

Along the same lines, 18% spoke of doing their best, and another 18% mentioned being aware of their impact, as well as staying informed about ways to reduce their impact. Fifteen percent spoke about meeting and understanding their legal obligations and another 15% of respondents spoke about influencing their company and product policy:

Well, because of our position we do have a way of, able to influence the product policy we produce. And we're responsible citizens to really keep in mind at all time how are we able to reduce the waste and the pollution. As long as we constantly remind ourselves of to make sure we do whatever is possible. Even if things get out of the way a little bit more, and don't just look at the bottom-line profit center so if it's good for the environment, and it doesn't have a really substantial burden on you, financially, or operationalized... (P#6)

Figure 12: Owner-Managers' Role Regarding Their Business's Environmental Impact



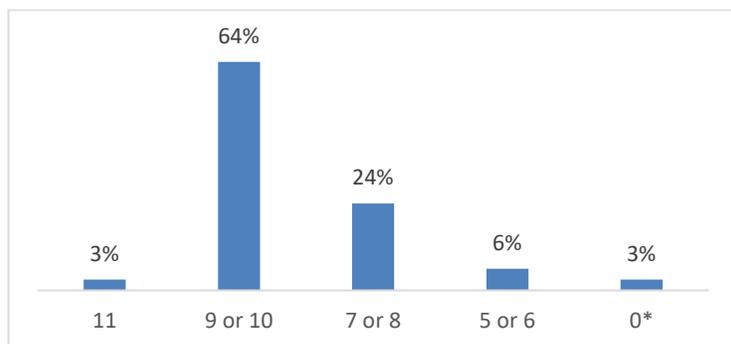
Owner-managers were also asked, on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most important and 1 not important at all, how important they think addressing climate change is. Figure 13 shows that 64% answered with 9 or 10 and 24% said 7 or 8. The figure also shows one participant (P#17) answered 0 – this is denoted by an asterisk because they shared the following:

If it's on a recorded call and if you really want the fake answer, 10. The real answer would be zero. ... I think that we cannot have climate change and inflation together. Climate change and the products we use and the mindset that we have cannot go hand in hand with inflation, especially when we are coming out of a pandemic.

This quote is highlighted because not only did P#17 exhibit high knowledge of climate change and sustainability issues but they develop solutions to be more sustainable; it is a part of their business

ethos, and are one of the two respondents who see climate change as an opportunity, which makes their response noteworthy.

Figure 13: On A Scale Of 1-10, Importance of Addressing Climate Change



4.5.2 Enablers

Devices that enable and support owner-managers in taking environmental actions are organized into two categories - *external mechanisms*, enablers not initiated by the owner-manager, and *internal mechanisms*, enablers initiated by the owner-manager.

4.5.2.1 External Mechanisms

Several respondents cited receiving services and support from third-party businesses that approached them. This was primarily related to Ontario’s LED (lighting) rebate program offered by the provincial government and energy retailers. All the respondents who mentioned the LED rebate program partook in it but were unaware of it until approached by a third party. None of the participants mentioned using energy retailers.

The CSR initiatives of some of their customers inspired them to develop more sustainable products. For example, P#15 shared that their customers have “requirements that the product be more efficient”, which they shared not only creates more opportunities to advance their technology but also helps them stay “ahead in technology” and their competitors. P#14 shared “... we hear it [sustainability] from the customers, we hear it from the manufacturers, the manufacturers themselves want to sell new equipment, and so that trickles down and there’s a push-pull on all factors.”

A few respondents, all of them involved in R&D, perceived the government as a source of support because of the financial incentives they receive, specifically the Scientific Research & Experimental

Development (SR&ED) program – a federal tax incentive available to businesses that invest in or conduct R&D, as P#15 explains “I want to add is that the Canadian government is very good in supporting technological development. And they have a program called SRED, so that gives a tax credit or refund.” P#23 shared that they were also approached by the federal government for another program called the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP).

In contrast, several of the interviewees mentioned that the government holds the greatest responsibility regarding environmental sustainability, specifically for enacting and enforcing relevant legislation. For example, P#31 shares that they have gotten pushback from their customers regarding implementing more environmental initiatives such as not providing single-use plastics, and therefore, they rather have the government legislate policy rather than enforce it through company policy, particularly given Canada’s diversity: “Canada because they’re too many cultures here so only the government can control everything.” Additionally, a couple of participants mentioned that the most effective ways to engage SMEs are by using incentives rather than fines and taxations, as well as using push communications, in particular email and tradeshow:

If the government, or different levels of governments, gave incentives, instead of putting fines on, or taxes on the polluters, in my opinion, instead of saying, ‘Oh, you’re polluting, so you need to pay more taxes or fees.’ If they gave incentives and ‘Hey, if you do something else, instead of this, this is what we will provide for you.’ I believe that would be more successful.... Because a lot of business owners, they go to tradeshow and in tradeshow, they [the government] can provide that information. And pretty much I would say more than 90% of business owners attend these tradeshow. So that’s a good place to show what’s available. (P#5)

4.5.2.2 Internal Mechanisms

Twenty percent said online information supported their environmental efforts, such as P#5 who after purchasing their business did not know how or where to dispose of toxic waste in an environmentally responsible way and searched for the answer online. Some respondents mentioned that they have contacted external resources to support their environmental initiatives, such as P#6 who reached out to a research lab to help them develop biodegradable PPEs. Similarly, P#17 shares that they contacted a local company regarding “a joint effort to help the city” dispose of PPEs and also mentioned they engage with “local youth for ideas, we work with a lot of universities... we find students who can tell us what could be done based on their own ideas” and as a result, have developed several products using recycled materials. Some owner-managers also mentioned engaging with their customers,

suppliers, or peer network. For example, P#3 contacts their “supplier for consultation and guidance.” P#16 states that “...a good 80% [of their research on how to improve their environmental profile was] engaging with other businesses in the area and especially with suppliers.”

Twenty-one percent mentioned internal supports, such as in-house expertise, supported their environmental efforts such as P#23 “...we employ a large number of engineers, technicians and we do a lot of R&D...” or P#30 “...we have a very good team and in-house knowledge...”. Internal supports also include education and training; 9% mentioned their education and training have supported them such as P#29 “...certain things like that [sustainability] was always kind of put into the curriculum...” or P#33 who paid to attend a sustainability course.

4.5.3 Barriers

The barriers to pursuing environmental action are organized by four themes that surfaced: capitalistic-sustainability paradox, customer and supplier CSR efforts, government, and resource constraints.

4.5.3.1 Capitalistic-Sustainability Paradox

Forty-eight percent of respondents spoke to societal and cultural mindsets entrenched in a capitalistic society, which appeared to jade their perspectives on sustainability. For example, several participants spoke of how growing up in their home country they never wasted anything nor did they see waste, everything was repurposed. Many mentioned that in Canada, not only is there a lot of waste, but things are intentionally made to be disposable and thus, wasteful. This was paired with discussions on overconsumption, greed, and lack of self-awareness when explicating why it is challenging to be sustainable:

... your technological advancement...our understanding of progressiveness, advancement, ... it means that more and more waste and more and more consumption is, it proves my point that how superior I am [and as a result] we are never satisfied... (P#13)

... there is naturally insane amount of waste. Insane amount of packaging which could be saved. Insane amount of food which is wasted. Absolute crazy consumerism, materialism, biggest gas guzzler they need to buy. Just it boggles your mind. And North America in general is the biggest polluter on the planet. We use the most amount of water every day, we use the most amount of food and waste food every day. We just gobble everything and think nothing of it. And then we try to point fingers at India and China, ‘You guys are not doing anything about climate change.’ (P#24)

... the capitalist view is we have to keep consuming to continue to grow but, at the same time, that's unsustainable and there's no real understanding between the government and corporations as to how that's going to look. So, you know, the idea that we're going to continue to grow and consume while trying to be sustainable seems to be an oxymoron that no one is willing to fight head-on, at least from the political point of view and I think that one it's going to be a hard one to win over. (P#28)

We have to simplify our lifestyle, and simplifying lifestyle means, we have to get used to a lot of discomfort, because we are so addicted to comfort and as the generations go by, it's getting more and more. ... what brings society to this mentality is the competitiveness that is engraved in our system, in our psyche that, oh, you have to compete in order to prove yourself, and succeeding in competition only means how much money you have. So, the goal is wrong now, that's where we are, we are all, it's messed up. ...Now look, as much as I try to be a philosopher, but I'm not, I'm a businessman... (P#30)

4.5.3.2 Inauthenticity of Customers and Suppliers' CSR Efforts

While a few participants found the CSR efforts of their suppliers and customers an enabler, these efforts appeared to be a barrier for many more because of the inauthenticity or the maladaptive consequences of these initiatives. For example, P#7, a food packaging manufacturer whose customer (a large American MNC) wanted 30% of their plastic food packaging to be made from potatoes, which they had deemed to be more sustainable. P#7 explained that this packaging has a higher environmental impact because neither plastic nor potatoes can be composted; the initiative failed after a year.

Similarly, P#13 (an apparel manufacturer) shared that some of their customers want fabrics made from bamboo or used plastic bottles because they believe they are supporting a green or circular economy, but manufacturing fabrics from these materials generally have a higher environmental footprint, which P#13 explained is not well understood. As a side note, fabrics made from plastic waste use 1.35% of global oil production, they introduce plastic microfibers into the environment, and these fabrics typically end up in landfills after a few wears given their low quality (Bryce, 2021). Similarly, converting bamboo into fabrics takes high amounts of chemicals to the point that the plant “no longer exists in the final fabric” (Watson, 2021).

In their efforts to be more sustainable, P#21 shared how they purchased compostable packaging, which is more expensive, and later found out by chance that the packaging is only compostable using

high heat that is specific for commercial composting. P#21 explained that they contacted their municipality to inquire if they support this type of commercial composting and were told that it is not supported and that “everything that had been touched by [the packaging will be ...] put it in the landfill” so that all other compostable materials that come into contact with this packaging are also diverted to the landfill.

Several participants mentioned that their customers want more sustainable products to support their CSR mandates but more sustainable alternatives are generally more expensive to manufacture and customers are unwilling to pay the extra costs, leading P#7 to say “The market is not ready for environmental friendly [options]...it's expensive about three times. So, our customers ... they don't want to spend that much money.” P#23 also shared that their customers are “getting pressure [to be] more environmentally friendly but then they don't want to pay for it.” Some respondents mentioned that firms want to purchase from a local company so they have a smaller carbon footprint but expect to pay the same cost as if it were manufactured overseas and will use tactics to undercut them, which is not financially viable for SMEs like P#11:

...these massive companies basically just challenge you, they go, 'OK, I can buy this from China for \$1.10 or I can buy it from you for \$1.50' and then what's the difference, 'OK, you're more environmentally friendly.' Well, they can pretend they care but do they really care when they're buying everything from there [China], right.... So that's the biggest hurdle I'd say is satisfying the customers. ...But they're [customers] trying to make it seem as if, 'No, no, your competitors quoted this.' No, they didn't. My competitors get the same pricing I do. If they're sourcing material the way you have asked us to source it, if they're sourcing it the same way then there's no way they can do that.

As part of their sustainability efforts, P#17 offers to take back materials so they can be repurposed or properly disposed of rather than ending up in landfills such as plastic tarps but rarely do their customers (many of them cities) return the materials. P#24, a signage manufacturer, shared stories of the wasteful ways of their customers, particularly public sector organizations (PSO):

We did the graphics [for PSO] it's the most wasteful organization I've come across. Every time we want to meet them, they want – supposing one set of drawings is 80-90 pages, they said you have to give us six sets of drawings every single time. Every time you make a change you have to completely [print] 80-90 pages of six sets of drawings...We lost money on the whole contract...It's their mindset... So very, very wasteful mindset.

A few participants also spoke about the efficacy of their customers' and suppliers' approaches to CSR. For example, P#23 explains that they are a supplier to MNCs, and as part of MNCs' CSR efforts, they audit their supply chain by asking suppliers to self-report on a generic list of sustainability indicators that are not relevant to them but requires work on their part:

...we have to supply reports every year and they measure our performance, and the requirement is that we need to improve every year...they are trying to deal with companies operating in areas where corruption is rampant, child labor, or any of these issues which does not exist here. So, we are struggling to prove that we don't have that. Simple answer we live in Canada and the Ministry of Labour will not allow us to do that. It's time-consuming trying to prove the negative...another management company who their whole function is to generate this and they get paid this way and they start wasting my time with some non-issues.

4.5.3.3 Government Barriers

Many of the respondents perceived the government as a barrier, particularly around incompetence and lack of engagement. Several participants view many government attempts as incompetent, ineffective, and inauthentic and thus, have a lack of faith and trust in the government's ability to be effective. For example, some respondents described government initiatives as a "tax grab" and "pretty meaningless" (P#2), or the belief that the government "bungles things up" (P#8). P#16 shares:

... I think the government is completely out of touch with the kind of financial incentives that are actually going to make [a difference] – especially small private businesses, sit up and take notice. ...almost seems like it's just the government trying to prop up this industry of consultants, right.

P#3 expressed that the government lacks knowledge about their industry and thus, perceives their attempts at legislating adequate environmental regulations as incompetent: "And there's a high lack of knowledge from the government of what we actually do or what they care about." P#11 expressed similar frustrations, as well as the government ignoring issues of greenwashing:

... the automotive companies will just close their eyes and then in turn the government will just close their eyes... I think it can be heavily cracked down upon. And it's not even hard, like these companies they're not hiding it.

Several participants mentioned how "it's difficult to do business in Canada with all the rules, regulations, environment policies" (P#17). For example, P#4 and P#18 shared that they want to repurpose their unused materials, which they said can be put to good use but due to the high overhead created by government bureaucracy, it is not financially feasible to do so.

Respondents also spoke of economic policies that encourage offshore competition that results in poor environmental outcomes. For example, P#11 and P#12 shared that businesses in countries like India and China offer much lower pricing because of cheaper labor and material costs and where environmental laws are laxer, making it challenging for them to compete whereas these costs are much higher in Canada. P#17 calls this “very unfair competition”, as many of these issues are rooted in government policy. Because of this competition, owner-managers such as P#28 and P#29 explain they have to keep their costs as low as possible to remain competitive and therefore, cannot pursue environmental action if it increases costs. A few participants also mentioned how government policies contribute to environmental problems, such as the PPE waste created by COVID-19 policies. P#13 who receives government contracts for manufacturing medical gowns shared that they must be individually packed and “has to be in plastic”, creating a lot of waste.

Several participants referred to a lack of government support and engagement in supporting SMEs, in which a sense of neglect surfaced:

...most of these companies that benefit from this [government programs] are established companies. (P#16)

...we expected that the government would do more to protect the manufacturers in Canada. ... we were doing the hard work and we never got noticed. ... the real SMEs, the small businesses like us never get the traction out there. (P#17)

There’s never outreach from the government... I think sometimes the government makes it harder. ...I always think we are born and raised in Toronto. This business has been around for 35 years. ... We know a lot of people, a lot of other businesses, a lot of organizations around the industry. And I always think, gosh, if we can't do it, no wonder people are just throwing things out by the tubs because even with our efforts and our experience, we can't find the right channel. (P#18)

Well, it would help – some guidance from the government, from the environmental agency to tell us these are the options available to reduce your carbon footprint or your environmental footprint. And we are not getting anything as such. We would love to get it because we don't have time as a small business, we don't have a research department, we don't have a person who is going to go out and look for all this. (P#25)

Additionally, many of the participants mentioned partaking in the Ontario LED rebate program, which they viewed as a positive initiative, yet none of them learned about this rebate from the

government or came across it on their own, highlighting opportunities for better government communication and outreach.

4.5.3.4 Resource Constraints

The biggest barrier that 58% of respondents indicated was related to financial aspects, particularly around three key areas. One, higher costs associated with *acquiring* sustainable options, such as obtaining eco-labeling, as P#13 explains “The label is quite expensive, so if I have to put the label ... it would be way too expensive for me to do it. That means ... I cannot focus on my main business...”. Two, higher costs of *manufacturing* more sustainable products. For instance, P#17 shares that they have made a biodegradable bag, which is more expensive to produce so they either have to absorb the cost or pass it on to the customers. However, several respondents mentioned customers are often unwilling to pay more for sustainable alternatives. Three, higher costs associated with *government regulations*, as P#30 explains:

Well, the environmental legislations that are being put in place more and more, chemical disposal costs has been rising, chemical disposal costs are definitely more than the cost of buying the chemicals.

Thirty-three percent of participants also indicated the lack of capacity as a barrier to taking on environmental initiatives, particularly time and human resources, as most have a small number of employees who already have dedicated roles and tasks. Taking on additional responsibilities such as researching and implementing sustainable initiatives requires knowledge and skills that they do not have and would have to learn about, which requires time and money, as P#16 explains:

You know, you need the time to a) really investigate b) run the project of comparing the benefit versus the cost and then actually doing the implementation. So yeah, a lot of the times we just did not have time.

Some respondents indicated that they offset these challenges by drawing on the mechanisms listed under Enablers, such as engaging online or peer resources. However, the willingness to pursue initiatives is largely based on the owner-managers' motivation to follow through, which some participants have and others do not, such as P#7: “Businesses don't want to spend money on their own because there's no return on it. Or there's a long-term investment, which doesn't benefit us”. Within this, there is also the inability to see the long-term benefits of these expenditures paired with the risk of unknown or unforeseen future costs as P#16 explains:

And I have to admit, if it was a smaller expenditure, you know \$10,000 maybe, I think that we would probably just do it anyway. But when you're looking at \$400,000 to \$500,000 – and then, you know, annual maintenance. And who knows what's going to happen in 15 years when we have to replace things. So yeah, that's one of the things that I would like to do but that we can't.

For others, the drive and desire are there but the overhead is too high:

...when I came into the business, I think I had much more ambition to see if we can make a change. But quite frankly, the day-to-day here is hard enough. Adding scope on an agenda item that isn't as universally recognized within our organization for prominence would be an extremely steep slope. (P#18)

And while this did frustrate some participants, it did not deter others. For example, P#17: “It just takes a lot of effort and within a smaller economy, we don't have the kind of traction we need. And of course, we are small. We can't change the world completely but we start somewhere.”

Another resource constraint is the lack of technology or lack of better alternatives, which 30% of participants cited, such as P#25 who said they would like to be able to reuse materials but there are no companies that provide such a service. Or P#31 who would like to use more sustainable packaging but there are none on the market, at least not at an affordable price. Finally, 33% of respondents cited a lack of knowledge as a barrier to pursuing environmental initiatives such as not knowing where to look, what to do, or what the options are. Some participants indicated they found it hard to know who to trust and had more trust in the information provided by the government versus companies trying to sell them a sustainable product or solution.

4.6 Discussion and Implications

The responses given by many of the study's participants support many of the findings from prior studies on SMEs and sustainability that did not approach this work from a lens of plurality. The study also makes novel contributions on demotivators, as well as barriers not found in the literature consulted. Table 13 summarizes the study's findings on what motivates, enables, and hinders diverse SME owner-managers in pursuing environmental action. Findings that support extant scholarship are denoted with a checkmark (✓) and findings not found in the literature *consulted* are placed under novel findings. The motivations, enablers, and barriers found in the literature consulted that were not explicitly or implicitly mentioned by the study's participants are denoted with an asterisk (*)

however, it does not mean that these motivators, enablers, or barriers do not hold true for some of the participants – they just may not have thought to mention it.

Table 13: Summary of Study Findings Compared to Consulted SME Scholarship

	Findings in Relation to Extant Scholarship Consulted	Novel Findings
Motivators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - owner-managers’ values, ethics, attitudes ✓ - compliance with laws and regulations ✓ - competitive advantage ✓ - less public pressure/reputational risk* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “no-waste” culture - values guided by common sense, future generations, faith-based reasons
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - internal resources/expertise ✓ - leverage external resources ✓ - autonomous decision-making * - informal structures and less bureaucracy * - more resources to cultivate relationships * 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - customer and supplier CSR directive
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - resource constraints ✓ - regulations more onerous ✓ - unable to see cost/benefits ✓ - neglect by institutions and officials ✓ - unaware of their impact ✓ - sustainability out of scope * 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainability & capitalism incompatibility - maladaptive, inauthenticity & bureaucracy of customer and supplier CSR efforts - government (incompetence and lack of engagement)

Consulted scholarship: Bansal and Roth, 2000; Fassin, 2008; Hammann et al., 2009; Revell et al., 2010; Battisti & Perry, 2011; Brammer et al., 2012; Hörisch et al., 2015; Chassé & Courrent, 2018; Wiesner et al., 2018; Amankwah-Amoah & Syllias, 2020; Barbosa et al., 2020; Belas et al., 2021; Cantele and Zardini, 2020; Kiefhaber et al., 2020; Schaefer et al., 2020; Revell et al., 2010 Westman et al., 2023

4.6.1 Motivators

Financial benefits (cost savings or receiving financial incentives) are a significant motivating factor, given the smaller levels of financial resources for SMEs, as found by Hörisch et al. (2015). Similar to Friedman and Miles (2002) and Lewis et al.'s (2015) findings, several participants believed their environmental impact is negligible especially compared to large corporations, which likely plays a key factor in motivations, particularly as some participants do not see their impact as part of the larger collective. Others acknowledged that even though their individual impact is small, it contributes to the overall impact regardless of their size. Further, most believe that they have a responsibility to minimize their business’s environmental impact, many of whom are willing to pay more or already do for sustainable alternatives, as evidenced in Revell et al. (2010).

Thus, the study’s findings do not fully support extant scholarship’s generalization that owner-managers are largely unmotivated or disengaged when it comes to environmental action. While these characterizations may hold true for a small minority of the study’s participants, many exhibited deep

concern and passion for environmental/sustainability issues, which is underpinned by the owner-managers' values and attitudes, such as a sense of moral or ethical responsibility, which was also identified by Cantele and Zardini (2020) and Schaefer et al. (2020). A novel contribution of this study is that many of these values are enshrined in a no-waste attitude that many expressed as a cultural norm (e.g., growing up reusing, never wasting). In some cases, environmental action was employee-driven, which the owner-managers cited due to cultural norms of not wasting. In other cases, it was based on customer and supplier CSR directives.

Several participants indicated that they would pursue environmental initiatives and are willing to pay more if they knew it would make a difference but many indicated distrust and skepticism of CSR and sustainability efforts based on their experiences, which the findings show is largely attributed to the incompatibility of Western sustainability and capitalism. These experiences include customers and suppliers that: request 'sustainable' products that actually have a greater negative environmental impact; demand sustainable alternatives but are unwilling to pay for them; and offload their CSR efforts onto them, which are perceived as bureaucratic and ineffective, reflecting that compliance is related to public pressure rather than authentic attempts (Bergman et al., 2015).

Thus, many of the respondents appeared to hold largely pessimistic views of sustainability and CSR efforts, or that environmental and climate issues can be resolved with the current undertakings of business and government, which influences their attitudes and whether they choose to pursue environmental action. Therefore, a key contribution of this study is that an underlying factor in (de)motivating SME owner-managers ought to consider the authenticity and efficacy of CSR and sustainability initiatives by government and business. Further, none of the study's participants mentioned public image, legitimacy, or other intangible assets, suggesting that reputational risk may not operate at this level for these owner-managers.

4.6.2 Enablers

Many of the participant responses support several of the enablers and recommendations to overcome barriers suggested in extant scholarship, such as utilizing internal resources and expertise, as well as leveraging external resources when internal resources are lacking, as discussed by Revell et al. (2010) and Hörisch et al. (2015).

In contrast, none of the participants mentioned forging collaborative relationships with other SMEs that share similar characteristics, as mentioned by Fassin (2008) and Lewis et al. (2015). Similarly,

the results do not support the enclave theory, which is premised on the idea that ethnic entrepreneurs are more likely to be successful in their efforts if they access ‘ethnic’ social capital (Nakhaie, 2015). None of the participants mentioned this voluntarily and when asked directly, no one indicated they sought out ‘ethnic’ resources. However, some participants do see their customers and suppliers as sources of support (social capital) for pursuing environmental action but it is unrelated to ethnic enclaves. For example, two participants indicated that their social capital network is diverse.

There are several additional enablers gained from this study. For example, an effective way to support SMEs is through financial-based incentives rather than penalties such as fines and taxation. Providing relevant information to support SMEs, particularly through push communications such as email and tradeshows was also indicated by some participants. When it comes to crafting communications, a recommendation based on Patara's (2024b) key findings of diverse SME owner-managers’ perspectives on climate and sustainability discourse, is that sustainability leaders not perceive themselves as the only experts or holders of sustainability knowledge and be open to a plurality of perspectives that may differ or contradict their knowledge and ways of knowing. This is particularly relevant in situations where there are power differentials and sustainability leaders are seeking participation and feedback, as it enables multi-way communication channels that are likely to garner greater engagement.

4.6.3 Barriers

The biggest barrier owners-managers cited in pursuing environmental action is related to resource constraints, particularly financial, which was also identified by Hörisch et al. (2015). There are some owner-managers who indirectly, as well as explicitly, indicated that they are unable to see or estimate the cost benefits of doing so especially when there are substantial upfront costs, which also surfaced in Brammer et al.'s (2012) findings; this was also applicable to some respondents who have the financial capital to pursue environmental initiatives. Similar to Fassin (2008), capacity constraints also pose a hindrance, particularly as none of the respondents indicated they have dedicated non-financial resources to pursue environmental initiatives. Further, 30% indicated a lack of knowledge as a hindrance in taking environmental action, as well as where to look and who to trust. Many referenced pollution and recycling when speaking about environmental, sustainability, and climate change issues, which may also suggest that some participants are not aware of other ways their

business has an environmental impact (Revell et al., 2010) and thus, the 30% figure is likely to be much higher.

Several participants indicated feeling neglected by governments, supporting the findings of Fassin (2008) and indicated government policies and bureaucracies make it onerous to pursue environmental initiatives, as indicated by Brammer et al. (2012). Many participants hold negative views of the government's ability to resolve environmental issues, particularly as it is perceived to contribute to unsustainability due to its policies, which may pose barriers to pursuing environmental action, supporting the findings of Williams and Schaefer (2013). Yet, several respondents also hold an expectation that the government ought to be leading environmental initiatives such as developing and enacting sound, just, and equitable legislation without overburdening SMEs, and just as importantly there is adequate enforcement of legislation, which was also identified by Lewis et al. (2015).

Several barriers surfaced in this study, which do not appear in the scholarship consulted. For example, the higher costs associated with procuring or producing more environmentally friendly options, as well as the insincerity and inconsistencies of customers' unwillingness to pay for sustainable products despite demanding them. The study also found the higher costs of producing more sustainable products may be more significant in competitive markets where SMEs can easily be undercut by foreign competitors, which may be more acute for the manufacturing sector compared to other sectors.

Finally, the findings also suggest that the paradox of Western sustainability and capitalism is also a barrier to motivating and enabling SMEs to take environmental action due to the inconsistencies and contradictions in a system that encourages high and unnecessary consumption and thus, waste (Karlsson & Ramasar, 2020). Therefore, attempts to address sustainability are often viewed with skepticism and distrust. This is particularly acute for owner-managers who have firsthand experience with the maladaptive consequences of CSR and sustainability efforts and the senselessness of some of these initiatives. Therefore, inconsistencies in customer and supplier CSR initiatives also pose barriers. However, an even more interesting finding is that many of the owner-managers linked the inauthenticity and hypocrisy more strongly to government than to business. For example, participants conveyed a strong sentiment of government not doing enough, suggesting perhaps governments are the dominant stakeholders for these SMEs. The importance of these findings is that attempting to address sustainability through economic and technological instruments without changing the

underlying mindset that created the unsustainability in the first place, seems unpromising (Banerjee, 2003; Prádanos, 2013; van Norren, 2020; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022).

4.7 Conclusion

This research supports many of the findings found in previous studies on SMEs and sustainability that did not approach this work from a lens of plurality. For example, the leading motivator for SMEs in pursuing environmental action is due to owner-managers' values and attitudes. A unique contribution to this finding is that many respondents indicated their decisions were based on the cultural norm of "no waste." Most respondents believed they had a responsibility to minimize their business's environmental impact and showed deep concern for environmental, climate, and sustainability issues.

The study uncovered several barriers not found in the literature consulted such as the higher costs of acquiring and manufacturing more environmentally friendly products and the unwillingness of customers to pay for more sustainable options, even the ones that demand it, and in some cases being undercut by foreign markets. While on the surface, the biggest enablers and barriers relate to financial considerations, a deeper examination suggests that tensions in pursuing environmental actions are also associated with experiencing the inauthenticity and hypocrisy of sustainability and CSR actions by customers, suppliers, and governments.

For many of the study's participants, this has resulted in cynicism and distrust and thus, likely influences attitudes and engagement. This is further juxtaposed by the fact that SMEs are considered "key for delivering sustainable and inclusive economic growth" (OECD, 2019, p. 3), which is not compatible with the finiteness of the natural world. Thus, a key impact of this research is that the paradox of Western sustainability and capitalism, paired with perceived and real inauthentic and ineffective attempts at sustainability and CSR initiatives may be what (de)motivates these SME owner-managers. Finally, what makes this study original and significant is that, unlike prior studies on SMEs and sustainability, it gains a plurality of perspectives from people who typically are not heard from. As such, future studies may want to consider similar research in different industries and geographies.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary and Discussion of Findings

“Sustainability means different things to different people” and as such sustainability is neither universal nor prescriptive (Banerjee, 2011, p. 722). As highlighted throughout this dissertation, sustainability is often pursued with the same mindset that created the problem (Prádanos, 2013), resulting in what the study refers to as *eurocentric sustainability*. It is unsurprising then, that overall sustainability continues to worsen (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2021). However, the voices confronting eurocentric sustainability are getting louder in various forms and one such channel is through sustainability studies taking on a pluriversality approach, including looking at other cosmovisions. This dissertation adds to the sustainability pluriverse through its three manuscripts.

Study 1 is a systematic literature review of eurocentrism and JS within business management and their implications for sustainability by a) exploring what characterizations of eurocentrism and JS are presented in business management literature; b) who is creating and contributing to these discourses; c) where these scholarships intersect and diverge; and d) how they are relevant business management and CSR.

Four aspects of eurocentrism emerged from the first study – the *superiority* of Western people, countries, ideas, knowledge, and values, which expresses through the *domination* and *oppression* of the non-West, particularly through ideas of *universalism* and *modernity*. Whereas JS exhibits as one approach for conducting pluriversality research that centers on sustainability injustices that are largely created by the consequences of eurocentrism. Regarding scholarship contribution, 91% of the first authors are from Western institutions, 47% are in business, and 45% are in other social sciences. Only 12% of the SLR articles are empirical, the remaining are reviews and conceptual papers.

The scale where these two paradigms operate is the key area where they diverge. The eurocentrism papers are on a global scale and JS papers are mostly local and predominantly in the US but JS is gaining traction in studies more globally. They intersect in several key areas such as oppression, the feminist dichotomy, the use of economic growth as indicators of success and progress, corporate self-interest (individualism), and the absence of culture and spirituality.

The relevance of these findings to business management illuminates how eurocentrism heavily informs how sustainability problems are understood and responded to, including how issues are interpreted, shaped, and disseminated, which tend to create problematic responses due to misreadings of sustainability issues. Whereas JS responds to the sustainability injustices and inequities largely created by eurocentrism through the tenets of plurality, inclusion, and justice. The findings were organized through business functions, in which CSR was the most prominent in both streams. This framing helps to elucidate the different ways in which business has an impact, as well as expose gaps for future research, particularly the integration of culture and spirituality in sustainability and business management.

Study 1 illuminates that a path to a sustainable future requires a more accurate and nuanced understanding of sustainability problems rather than ones steeped in eurocentric tropes and thus, shines a light on the need to understand sustainability from fresh and new perspectives, particularly from groups that have traditionally been excluded or overlooked, as well as the interplay between sustainability and spirituality, culture, and collectivism.

Responding to the gaps identified in Study 1, Study 2 explores the climate and sustainability discourse through the perspectives of diverse SME owner-managers in Ontario's manufacturing industry, the implications that these perspectives have for action, and the role of spirituality in these understandings using discourse analysis, a qualitative approach for interpreting language in use.

Eight discourses surfaced from the analysis, each revealing a distinct way of thinking and speaking about sustainability. While participants spoke to the environmental dimensions, particularly when discussing climate change, they were often intrinsically conveyed, and thus, the environmental dimensions are embedded in each of the eight discourses rather than being presented separately.

The *interdependency* discourse speaks to how everything on Earth is interconnected, a concept that is prevalent in spirituality and other cosmovisions. In the *social* discourse, owner-managers spoke of cultivating relationships with their employees, customers, and suppliers, substantiating extant SME scholarship about the value of relationships (e.g., Hammann et al., 2009). The social discourse also includes concerns about current and future generations' abilities to meet their needs, which is a theme found in similar studies (e.g., Fleming & Vanclay, 2009). Instead of speaking through economic terms (e.g., profit, growth), most participants used the *longevity* discourse that expressed ideas of the continuity, stability, and adaptability of their business and livelihood. This discourse also highlights

concerns some participants have in ensuring they can maintain their livelihoods, which is particularly acute for SMEs whose temporal scales are substantially different than large businesses. The *responsibility* discourse conveys ideas of duty and ethics that many owner-managers expressed in ensuring their business meets its legal and ethical obligations. These four discourses strongly align with the core ideas presented in spirituality, culture, and collectivism scholarships.

The discourse of *superiority* speaks to things such as overconsumption, greed, never being satisfied, competitiveness, addiction to comfort and convenience, and thinking we (particularly in the West) are advanced. The *power* discourse speaks to the hegemonic asymmetries that impose dominant ways of knowing and doing, such as applying prescriptive and generalized approaches to sustainability that may devalue the perspectives and knowledge that are not congruent to knowledge produced by Western standards, also indicative of eurocentrism, particularly oppression and domination. The *paradoxical* discourse speaks to the incompatibility of Western sustainability and capitalism, which expresses through perceptions of inconsistencies, maladaptive action, and hypocrisies, imbuing ideas of universalism and modernity. Finally, the *pessimism* discourse embodies a perceived lack of action and progress, as well as a sense of hopelessness and apathy. Most of these ideas are also embedded in eurocentrism and degrowth scholarships.

These last four discourses largely speak to participants' reactions to eurocentric sustainability. The implications of these findings suggest inaction by SMEs but that this inaction may be misinterpreted as a lack of engagement, motivation, knowledge, or resources when it likely has more to do with not wanting to engage in eurocentric sustainability and the maladaptive consequences it brings. Further, many spoke of sustainability through spirituality, imbuing ideas of interdependency and connectedness commonly associated with collectivism yet not commonly found within Western sustainability literature and practice.

The four aspects of eurocentrism that surfaced from Study 1 also surfaced in Study 2 but the language does not translate directly for SMEs. Superiority is the one theme that comes up in both studies. Domination and oppression identified in Study 1 show up as the power discourse in Study 2 and universality manifests in the paradoxical discourse. While ideas of modernity surfaced within the superiority, paradoxical, and power discourses in Study 2, it was not a dominant theme to justify its own category. The pessimism discourse, which is almost exclusively applicable to environmental issues, was not perceptible in Study 1.

A key contribution of this study is that not only does sustainability mean different things to different people, but that knowledge comes in different forms. Moreover, many of the participants' viewpoints are found in eurocentrism, CSR, and degrowth literature (the embodiment of eurocentric sustainability). This is a salient point for Western countries such as Canada that heavily rely on immigrants from non-Western countries because how climate and sustainability challenges are framed and perceived is central to how solutions are determined and legitimized. This also illuminates the imperative for examining what motivates, supports, and hinders diverse SME owner-managers in pursuing climate and environmental action and while several studies have examined this from Western perspectives and standards, no known study has carried out this research from the perspectives of non-Western peoples.

To address this research gap, using the same dataset Study 3 examines the motivators, enablers, and barriers to pursuing climate and environmental action and also investigates if these findings align with what is known in literature. The research affirms many of the findings found in extant SME-sustainability scholarship that did not pursue this research through a lens of plurality, such as owner-managers being motivated by personal values. What this suggests is that many of the motivators, enablers, and barriers uncovered in this study are associated with the participant's role as an SME owner-manager whereas the findings from the second study appear to be associated with the participant's role as a human being on this Earth, sometimes interspersed with being a non-Westerner. Nevertheless, the study did discover some findings contrary to existing literature, such as SMEs being perceived as being unmotivated, laggards, and/or disengaged and thus, seeing little value in pursuing sustainability initiatives. While this may be true for a minority of the study's participants, most believed they had a responsibility to minimize their business's environmental impact and showed deep concern for environmental, climate, and sustainability issues. Study 3 also uncovered several barriers not found in the literature consulted such as the higher costs of acquiring and manufacturing more 'sustainable' products and the unwillingness of customers to pay for sustainable options, even the ones that demand it, and in some cases being undercut by foreign markets.

On the surface, the biggest enablers and barriers relate to financial matters but more profoundly, the tensions in pursuing environmental action are also associated with experiencing the inauthenticity and hypocrisy of sustainability and CSR initiatives, resulting in pessimism and distrust and thus, influencing attitudes and engagement. An even more interesting finding is that many of the

participants articulated the inauthenticity and hypocrisy just as strongly with government as with business and in some cases even more, as many participants conveyed a strong sentiment of governments not doing enough. Thus, a key finding of the third study is that perceptions of the sustainability-capitalism paradox from the second study, paired with perceptions of inauthentic and ineffective CSR attempts, may have strong implications on participants' perceptions of sustainability and what actions they decide to pursue, if any.

This section concludes with a discussion on identities as it pertains to the findings. All the study's participants are SME owner-managers, self-identified PoC, and Canadian residents; some are employers, immigrants, parents, and grandparents. There are likely many more socially constructed roles they hold but these are not identities. "Identity can't be compartmentalized...[as it is] made up of many components in a mixture that is unique" to each individual (Maalouf, 2000, p. 2). As Maalouf (2000) articulates, there are multiple dimensions to one's identity that are interwoven, some dimensions may be more prominent and others dormant or hidden. This was further evidenced in the interviews when participants at one point in the conversation were speaking as an SME, moments later more as an immigrant, and at other times as a parent, an employer, and so on.

Further, attributing social roles to one's identity is counter to the Buddhist perspective, which views personal identity as a 'delusion' and egoic, and is one of the causes of human suffering (Shiah, 2016). As such, I made an intentional choice not to project or attribute any label to any perceived roles nor was it the objective of this research to do so. Compartmentalizing these dimensions or mislabeling them as identities would not offer valuable insights but rather perpetuate pitfalls of poor research that generalize and theorize findings into an inaccurate narrative (Subramani & Kempner, 2002; Naidoo, 2003; Sabaratnam, 2013). What makes this study original and significant is that it avoids this generalizing and stereotyping of people/groups and instead contributes to the sustainability pluriverse by adding *perspectives* from people who typically are not heard from.

5.2 Research Contributions & Recommendations

5.2.1 Scholarly

Despite eurocentrism being the dominant mindset that governs the world and the rich body of work dedicated to this scholarship for over fifty years, there are limited studies that have explicitly investigated eurocentrism in relationship to business management, where much of the unsustainability

stems from. This dissertation makes valuable contributions to the sustainability and CSR discourses by explicating linkages as to a) how eurocentrism manifests within business management; b) how this missing connection/understanding contributes to sustainability problems; and in turn c) how sustainability responses can perpetuate the problems it is attempting to solve. The three studies offer deeper insights into this phenomenon by elucidating how the mindset that creates unsustainability, underpinned by eurocentrism, is the same mindset used to solve it. By doing so, the thesis creates linkages to, and therefore, contributes to knowledge in diverse scholarships of sustainability, sustainability management, CSR, SME, eurocentrism, collectivism-individualism, and spirituality.

The first study creates novel associations as a result of integrating data points from eurocentrism and business management that offer new relationships by a) naming eurocentrism's four avatars and b) how eurocentrism manifests not only in business and CSR but the broader sustainability discourse and c) giving name to *eurocentric sustainability*. This contribution is important, because as more firms adopt CSR and sustainability strategies, and more business schools include CSR and sustainability in their curricula, the more sustainability issues worsen (Banerjee, 2003, 2008a; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Hoffman, 2023).

This dissertation highlights the importance of embracing other ways of thinking, knowing, and doing, because not only does sustainability mean different things to different people (Banerjee, 2011), but the way sustainability problems are perceived is key in understanding what solutions are perceived as achievable (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009). This research draws from and builds on the knowledge created by others who critically examine eurocentric sustainability in its various forms (e.g., Banerjee, 2003; Du Pisani, 2006; Dylan, 2012; Demaria et al., 2013; Ala-Uddin, 2019; Dengler & Seebacher, 2019; Muradian, 2019; van Norren, 2020; Hickel, 2021; Velasco-Herrejón et al., 2022). However, there are limited empirical studies in this domain, particularly ones that include the voices of people who have typically been excluded and overlooked, of which there are many, race and geography notwithstanding.

Study two is one of the first known empirical studies to investigate how the sustainability discourse within business is perceived and spoken of by participants whose family origins are from the non-West, how these perceptions align or differ from Western ideas of sustainability, and the role spirituality and culture play in these understandings. This study empirically shows that interdependency, responsibility, longevity, and social (collectivism) are core to the idea of both

sustainability and spirituality, revealing that sustainability and spirituality have many overlapping qualities. The second study adds to the sustainability pluriverse and contributes to the burgeoning scholarship that contrasts the Western idea of sustainability with non-Western cosmovisions, which has a core focus on culture and spirituality such as *buen vivir* (Escobar, 2015), *ubuntu* (Adams et al., 2018), *Mother Earth* (Nunez, 2011; Ramirez, 2021), *kaitiakitanga* and *whanaungatanga* (Awatere et al., 2017).

The significance of this contribution is that extant literature shows that SMEs' environmental engagement is strongly influenced by the owner-managers' values (Hammann et al., 2009; Brammer et al., 2012; Schaefer et al., 2020). Values are generally shaped by ethics and for many, ethics are informed by spirituality (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019). Study 2 highlights the importance of considering and incorporating spirituality and culture into the sustainability discourse. For example, the principle of 'no-waste' is a key motivator for many of the study's participants, which is driven by a cultural mindset that was not found in the scholarships consulted, or at least not with this framing, which is prevalent in Eastern spiritual ideas (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019).

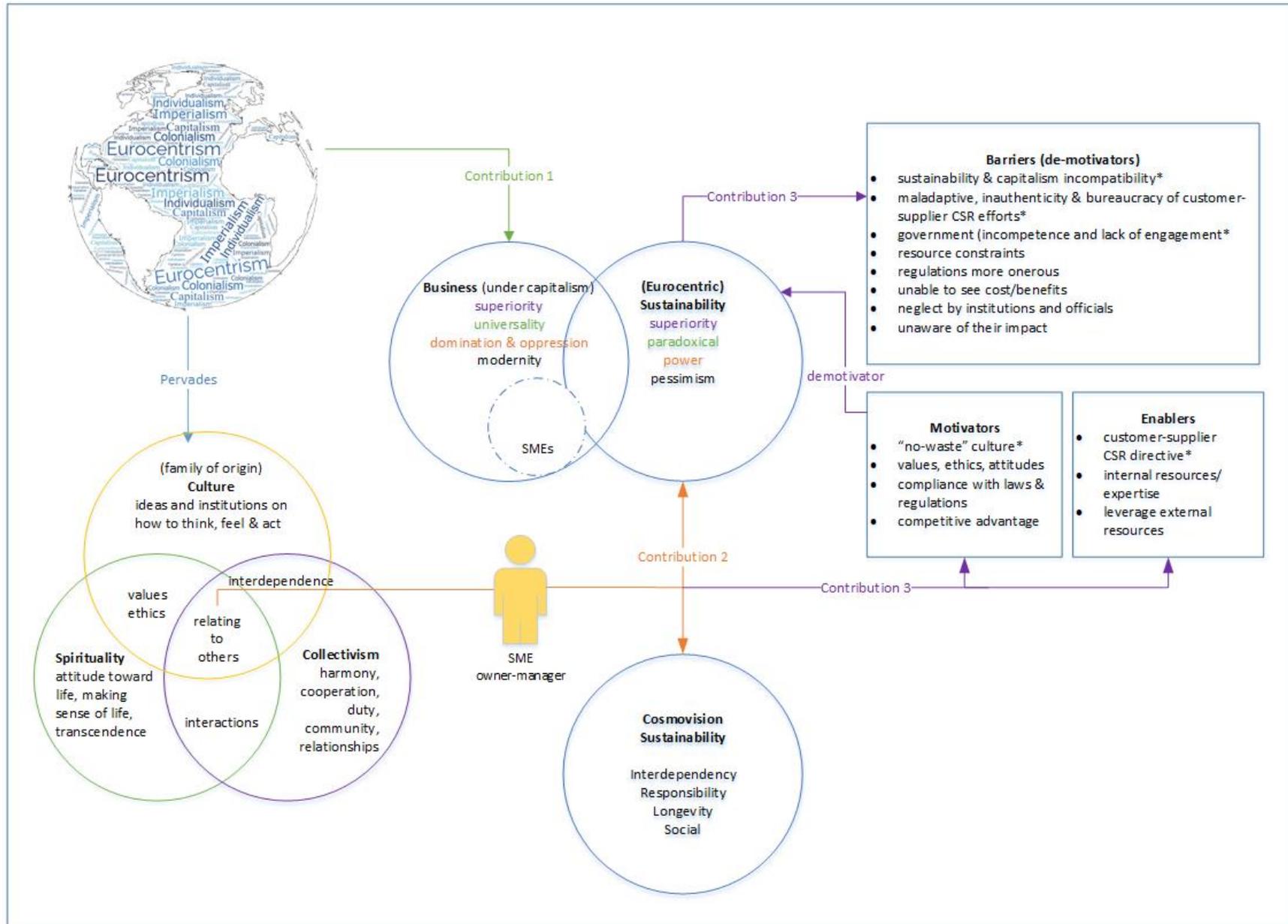
Through Study 3, another important contribution this dissertation makes to the CSR, SME, and sustainability management scholarship is the far-reaching impact that the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of CSR and sustainability efforts have on the SMEs' motivation for engaging in environmental action, signaling an interesting avenue for future research.

The biggest and key contribution of this study is that eurocentrism is underpinned by the superiority and universality of Western knowledge, values, and epistemology that transcends race and geography and that the sustainability discourse is not immune to this. Therefore, sustainability scholars not only need to be aware of and understand the diversity of sustainability and climate change perceptions but also respond to the diversity of perspectives because how problems are shaped and understood is fundamental to how responses are accepted and adopted (Fleming & Vanclay, 2009). Therefore, a key contribution of this study is that sustainability takes into consideration not only diverse perspectives but different ways of knowing, thinking, and doing, including language use, and not come into the conversation as the only knowledge holders.

To reaffirm, this study does not claim to present non-eurocentric or non-Western perspectives because not only is that impossible given the saturation of eurocentrism, but it would also be impossible to disentangle what perspectives are embedded in colonial histories and which are not.

What this study does contribute to is taking the construct of eurocentrism, which emerged on a global scale, and illustrates the ways in which it manifests at local and regional scales for SME owner-managers whose family origins are from a non-Western country and reside in a Western country. Finally, as pluriversality studies are relatively nascent in most domains, this research also serves to trailblaze a path for empirical pluriversality studies examining sustainability in business management. The synthesis figure provided in Chapter 1 has been revised in Figure 14 to incorporate the outcomes from this dissertation and how it contributes to scholarship.

Figure 14: Synthesis Figure Revised with Study's Findings



5.2.2 Practical and Empirical

5.2.2.1 Climate, Sustainability, & Business Leaders

It is not only sustainability and sustainability management scholars that need to be aware of and understand the diversity of sustainability and climate change perceptions but also climate change, sustainability, and business leaders and practitioners. Therefore, one recommendation of the study is that leaders take into consideration not only diverse perspectives but also different ways of understanding and communicating, including language use, and not come into the conversation as the only holder of knowledge, particularly in situations where leaders are seeking participation and feedback, as it enables multi-way communication channels that are likely to garner greater engagement. This approach is essential given that sustainability issues comprise both local and global issues.

5.2.2.2 Government Officials

Many of the study's participants believe that governments hold the most responsibility and accountability, namely because governments are the only entities that can enforce regulations. While a few participants see governments as a source of support many more view government as a barrier due to perceptions of incompetence. Further, many feel neglected due to a lack of engagement and desire greater engagement from governments, such as providing information on how SMEs can reduce their impact. Some participants indicated that push information such as email and tradeshow are some of the most effective ways to engage with SMEs. Additionally, many of the participants are motivated and supported by financial incentives (e.g., cost savings and rebates) rather than penalties (e.g., fines). Therefore, one of the practical contributions of this study is for governments to consider customized approaches based on subsectors, as well as improvements in communications and incentives.

5.2.2.3 SMEs

The results of this dissertation present the perspectives of the climate and sustainability discourse, as well as communicate the motivators, enablers, and barriers for diverse SME owner-managers in Ontario's manufacturing industry in pursuing environmental action. The findings are aimed at supporting governments, sustainability leaders, and scholars with more nuanced perspectives and thus, be better positioned to understand and address the perspectives, motivators, enablers, and barriers outlined in the study. Therefore, recommendations to SMEs are that they continue using their

sound judgment and only pursue actions if they believe it to be sustainable rather than relying solely on sustainability leaders, particularly when it may be maladaptive to do so. It is also recommended that they find ways to speak up when they are asked to take action in the name of sustainability and know it to be maladaptive.

5.3 Research Limitations & Future Research

Returning to Escobar (2018, p. 83), “pluriversal studies will travel its own paths as it discovers worlds and knowledges that the sciences have effaced or only gleaned obliquely”, as such there are countless ways that pluriversality research can be conducted, which need not be viewed as research limitations but rather as defining features of the study and/or as future research opportunities.

One of the main contributions of this study is using eurocentrism as the central lens to approach this research. However, the term eurocentrism may seem outdated or irrelevant for discussions outside of Europe or within a business context, particularly with the popularity of the term *decolonization/decolonize*, or the fact that colonialism, imperialism, and/or eurocentrism may be used interchangeably. As such, future studies may want to take into consideration the various ways eurocentrism may be spoken of and inferred indirectly, unknowingly, and implicitly.

Furthermore, spirituality is an ancient, complex, and nuanced concept that comes in the form of various names and meanings (cosmovisions). The role of spirituality, as well as culture in this study, only scratches the surface. There is much breadth to explore within this domain alone without examining the interplay of sustainability and/or business. As such there is a plethora of future research opportunities within this realm, particularly for empirical studies. For example, similar studies can be undertaken by looking at specific spiritual traditions of Buddhism, the Vedas, or the indigenous peoples of the West and non-West. In particular, gaining perspectives from those who uphold spiritual traditions or worldviews based on *Sanatan Dharm* would be an interesting facet to explore because how one perceives life, death, and karm may be vastly different from adherents of Abrahamic religions (Marbaniang, 2018) and thus, perhaps how the environment and the concepts of sustainability are perceived.

In a similar vein, eurocentrism has also led to “excessive preoccupations” with physical and technological inventions – the “mechanization of the cosmos”, which in turn has led to a manufactured demand of creating a world of comfort and convenience (i.e., *attachments*) that is not only unsustainable but has resulted in great mental suffering on how to maintain this comfort

(Skolimowski, 1974, p. 75; Gibson-Graham et al., 2019); these ideas also surfaced in this study but were not explored further. Some Eastern faiths such as Buddhism impart that *life is suffering*, and the direct cause of suffering is attachments (e.g., to material things, people, thoughts); thus, to end suffering, one must overcome attachments (Mishra, 2004). Exploring this area as a path towards sustainability would be highly relevant and valuable.

Additionally, given this study aims to be a plurality study that takes into consideration the perspectives of non-Western people whose first language may or may not be English, the study recognizes the limitations of restricting this study to English – this includes the literature review, inclusion criteria for the SLR, as well as conducting the interviews in English. Conceptualizations are entangled with language (Luetz & Nunn, 2023) and words have different meanings for individuals, particularly from different parts of the world (Kvale, 1994). For example, a word may not exist in a language even though it is tacitly known or is conceptualized in a different way, such as the English word sustainability. However, it is known that sustainability is conceptualized in different ways such as *ubuntu*, *buen vivir*, or *Mother Earth*. Therefore, future studies may want to consider exploring sustainability discourse in other languages, cultures, and regions. One interesting avenue may be to approach a similar study with an indigenous community of a particular country, its diaspora community abroad, or both as a comparative study.

5.4 Conclusion

This study, along with many scholars, recognizes that the world's unsustainability is largely due to an overemphasis on capitalistic ideals which have led to the degradation of our natural environment and created deep socio-economic disparities whereby “everything is measured in terms of economic growth” (Nayak, 2018, p. 166). It has also created and deepened the nature-culture divide and thus, an instrumental cause of the world's unsustainability. This divide must be repaired; a pivotal way to that is through the inclusion and integration of spirituality and culture, which also includes the integration of non-Western voices and perspectives. As such, there is a critical need for research that investigates how we repair this divide despite 500 years of effort that has engrained the idea that progress, modernity, economic growth, and capitalism are the only paths to success, contentment, and joy. The way we respond to this divide will determine humanity's fate going forward.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Prompts for Research Question 2

This is a subset of questions relevant to this research; additional questions were asked for a companion study on motivations, enablers, and barriers. Questions denoted by a * are based on Schaefer et al.'s (2020) interview prompts.

Business Context

1. Can you confirm the name of your business?
2. Are you the owner?
3. How long have you owned this business?
4. How many employees do you have?
5. Can you briefly describe your business operations and what products your manufacture?

Perceptions & Sources of Information

6. What does the word sustainability mean to you?
7. What does climate change mean to you? *
8. Where do you learn about climate change, sustainability, or other environmental issues?
9. What messages do you hear about climate change and the environment? *

Owner Demographics

10. Which country were you born in?
 - What is your family's country of origin?
 - How long have you lived in Canada?
11. What is your native/mother tongue/language?
12. What is your age?
 - Can you talk about your education - what did you study and where?
13. Does religion or spirituality influence your ideas about the environment or nature?
 - Which one?

Appendix B

Interview Prompts for Research Question 3

This is a subset of questions participants were asked relevant to this study. Questions denoted by a * are based on Schaefer et al.'s (2020) interview prompts ** indicates questions borrowed from the TRANSFORM project. Additional questions were asked for a companion study, including ones on business context and owner demographics.

Environmental Impact

1. Can you describe the environmental impact you think your business has from manufacturing, transportation, use, and disposal – the entire value chain? *
2. What things do you do to reduce your business's environmental impact? *

Motivators

3. Why these things and where did you learn about them? *
4. As a small business owner, what do you think your role is regarding your business's environmental impact and action? *

Barriers

5. What environmental issues do you want to pursue but can't?
6. What or who has stopped or blocked you from taking environmental action? **

Enablers

7. Who or what has helped or supported you in taking environmental action? **
8. What skills and resources do you think are most important in helping you take environmental action? **
9. What support, skills, or resources do you need help with to be more environmental? **

Sources of Information

10. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most important and 1 not important at all, how important do you think addressing climate change is? Why do you think this?
11. Where do you learn about climate change, sustainability, or other environmental issues?
12. What messages do you hear about climate change and the environment?

Appendix C

North American Industry Classification System – Manufacturing Sector

Code	Subsector
311	Food manufacturing
312	Beverage and tobacco product manufacturing
313	Textile mills
314	Textile product mills
315	Clothing manufacturing
316	Leather and allied product manufacturing
321	Wood product manufacturing
322	Paper manufacturing
323	Printing and related support activities
324	Petroleum and coal product manufacturing
325	Chemical manufacturing
326	Plastics and rubber products manufacturing
327	Non-metallic mineral product manufacturing
331	Primary metal manufacturing
332	Fabricated metal product manufacturing
333	Machinery manufacturing
334	Computer and electronic product manufacturing
335	Electrical equipment, appliance, and component manufacturing
336	Transportation equipment manufacturing
337	Furniture and related product manufacturing
339	Miscellaneous manufacturing

(Statistics Canada, 2017)

Appendix D

Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear [business owner]

My name is Saveena Patara, I'm a PhD student at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you as an owner of a small manufacturing business (please forward this message to the correct email if you're not the owner).

Request for Participating

I'm studying small and medium-sized businesses and environmental sustainability and I'm looking for:

1. small and medium-sized businesses owners in Ontario (under 500 employees and NOT a franchise)
2. in the [Manufacturing](#) industry (e.g., food, chemical, wood, metal, glass, clothing – click on the link for a complete list)
3. who self-identify as a person of colour/visible minority/racialized person

I believe you meet all 3 criteria. If this is correct, I would very much like to speak to you so I can learn from you about your business. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and can be done either in person at your place of business (I would follow COVID protocols) or online (Zoom/Teams) at a date and time that is convenient for you.

Benefits of Participating

Information on small businesses and sustainability has been mostly created by white people for white business owners. My research involves learning from a more diverse range of business owners.

As a thank you, and if interested, you will receive the results of this research, which may support you with your environmental/sustainability initiatives.

There is no cost or risk in participating and no preparation or training is required.

How to Participate

If you're interested in participating, it would be greatly appreciated if you can reply to this email and let me know if you prefer an online or in-person interview - feel free to indicate dates/times you prefer. I will then contact you to set up a date and time. I'm hoping to complete all my interviews by the end of August. If you would like to participate but are not ready to book an interview, please send me a quick email and I can follow up with you at a later date.

If you would like to learn more about the study, we can chat over the phone first.

If you know of other business owners who would be interested in participating, please consider forwarding this email to them.

If you do NOT fit the criteria or are NOT interested in participating, I would greatly appreciate it if you could please reply with a "no thank you" and you will not receive any further emails from me.

Contact Information

This research is part of my PhD degree from the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Amelia Clarke. For any questions or more information, please contact me or my supervisor, Professor Amelia Clarke, at 519-888-4567 ext. 48910 at amelia.clarke@uwaterloo.ca.

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the University of Waterloo's Research Ethics Board (REB #43780). Thank you for considering supporting me and this valuable research.

Appendix E

Participant Demographics

P	Age	Time in Canada	Highest Level of Education	Major	Education Location	Family Origin Region	English as Native Language	Year Bus. Est.	Time as Owner (years)	No. of Staff
1	78	48	Apprentice	Mechanic	Multiple	Asia	N	1988	34	8
2	N/A	Birth	Masters	Accounting	N. America	Asia	Y	1985	1 month*	5
3	33	Birth	Bachelor	Accounting & Chemistry	N. America	Asia	Y	1986	4	35
4	34	Birth	Bachelor	Business	N. America	Asia	Y	1985	5	100
5	45	22	Apprentice	Machinist	Europe	Asia	N	2007	15	7
6	69	57	Bachelor	Accounting/ Finance	N. America	Asia	N	1985	37	70
7	71	48	Masters	Political Science	Asia	Asia	N	1983	37	19
8	83	37	Masters	Business	N. America	LAC	Y	1994	28	20
9	53	28	Diploma or equivalent (DE)	Industrial Engineering	N. America	Asia	N	2011	11	6
10	76	44	grade school	N/A	N/A	Asia	N	1984	38	19
11	22	18	in progress	Accounting	N. America	Asia	Y	2011	5	4
12	59	42	DE	Engineering	N. America	Asia	N	2010	12	15
13	55	22	Bachelor	N/A	Asia	Asia	N	2000	3	10
14	38	33	Bachelor	IT	N. America	Asia	N	1992		7
15	72	52	Masters	Engineering	N. America	Asia	N	1994	28	12
16	44	Birth	Bachelor	Politics and economics	N. America	Asia	Y	2003	13	21
17	50	35	Bachelor	Business & Law	Asia	Asia	N	1997	N/A	16
18	40	Birth	Masters	Int'l Dev.	N. America	Asia	Y	1985	9	100
19	34	Birth	Bachelor	Economics	N. America	Asia	Y	1992	12	100
20	59	25	DE	Accounting	Asia	Asia	N	2007	15	2
21	30	Birth	Bachelor	Economics	N. America	LAC	Y	2020	2	7
22	47	21	DE	Electrical Engineering	N. America	Asia	N	2000	22	18
23	71	47	Masters	Electrical Engineering	N. America	Asia	N	2000	22	28
24	62	36	Masters	Business	Africa	Africa	N	1994	28	18
25	70	49	Certificate	Business	N. America	Asia	N	1986	40	10
26	40	21	DE	Childcare	Europe	Asia	Y	2017	5	2
27	30	Birth	Bachelor	Economics	N. America	Asia	Y	2016	6	30
28	37	Birth	Bachelor	Electrical Engineering	N. America	Asia	Y	1983	N/A	60
29	23	Birth	DE	Food	N. America	LAC	Y	2018	4	0
30	62	45	Bachelor	Chemical Engineering	N. America	Asia	N	1994	27	16
31	67	24	Bachelor	Food science	Asia	Asia	N	2000	22	20
32	79	52	Masters	Economics	Asia	Asia	N	2002	20	25
33	45	36	Bachelor	Sociology & Languages	N. America	LAC	Y	2012	10	0

* took over ownership from parents

Appendix F

Research Ethics Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Notification of Ethics Clearance to Conduct Research with Human Participants

Principal Investigator: Amelia Clarke (School of Environment, Enterprise and Development)

Student investigator: Saveena Patara (School of Environment, Enterprise and Development)

File #: 43780

Title: What are just sustainabilities and what does it mean for racialized small business owners, their corporate social responsibility, and climate and sustainability strategies?

The Human Research Ethics Board is pleased to inform you this study has been reviewed and given ethics clearance.

Initial Approval Date: 12/20/21 (m/d/y)

University of Waterloo Research Ethics Boards are composed in accordance with, and carry out their functions and operate in a manner consistent with, the institution's guidelines for research with human participants, the Tri-Council Policy Statement for the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS, 2nd edition), International Conference on Harmonization: Good Clinical Practice (ICH-GCP), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), the applicable laws and regulations of the province of Ontario. Both Boards are registered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Federal Wide Assurance, FWA00021410, and IRB registration number IRB00002419 (HREB) and IRB00007409 (CREB).

This study is to be conducted in accordance with the submitted application and the most recently approved versions of all supporting materials.

Expiry Date: 12/21/22 (m/d/y)

Multi-year research must be renewed at least once every 12 months unless a more frequent review has otherwise been specified. Studies will only be renewed if the renewal report is received and approved before the expiry date. Failure to submit renewal reports will result in the investigators being notified ethics clearance has been suspended and Research Finance being notified the ethics clearance is no longer valid.

Level of review: Delegated Review

Signed on behalf of the Human Research Ethics Board



Karen Pieters, Manager, Research Ethics, karen.pieters@uwaterloo.ca, 519-888-4567, ext. 30495

This above named study is to be conducted in accordance with the submitted application and the most recently approved versions of all supporting materials.

Documents reviewed and received ethics clearance for use in the study and/or received for information:

file: 2. Screening Questionnaire.docx

file: 3a. Recruitment Confirmation.docx

Glossary

Business: a commercial enterprise under a capitalistic business model “designed to maximize profit, often while ‘externalizing’ social and environmental costs” (Ordonez-Ponce et al., 2021, p. 23) –other business models such as co-operatives and non-profits are *not* included in this study.

Colonialism: the *policy* or *practice* of appropriating political control over another country, of which there are two categories - exploitative and settler (Young, 2020).

Colonization: an *action* or *process* of settling among and/or instituting control over foreign territories and the indigenous peoples of those lands (Kohn & Reddy, 2017).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): a firm’s strategy for sustainable development where it voluntarily operates within the three pillars of sustainability (Wesselink et al., 2015).

Culture: “ideas, institutions, and interactions that tell a group of people how to think, feel and act” (Markus & Conner, 2014, p. xix).

Decoloniality: *localized forms* of critical thinking that challenge the epistemological, cultural, and spiritual issues embedded within Western colonialism and ideologies, particularly Western capitalism (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Decolonization: action-based *movements* to re-situate all aspects of present-day life outside of Western thought (Young, 2020).

Diverse Owner-Manager: an SME owner-manager in Ontario’s manufacturing industry whose family origins are from the non-West, regardless of their country of birth.

Eurocentrism (also known as Westernization/Western-centrism): a *mindset* that upholds the belief that Western values, knowledge, education, science, and cultures are superior and universal to that of the non-West; spread through ideas of *modernity*, as well as *domination* and *oppression* of others and nature (Wallerstein, 1997; de Sousa Santos, 2009; Shohat & Stam, 2009; Araújo & Maeso, 2012; Sabaratnam, 2013; Drebes, 2014; Sundberg, 2014; Kohn & Reddy, 2017; Wijesinghe et al., 2019; Hemais et al., 2021; Komlosy, 2021).

Eurocentric Sustainability: sustainability discourse and practice based on Western values, knowledge, values, judgment, and epistemology imbued by the four features of eurocentrism (superiority, universality, modernity, and domination/oppression) that perceives sustainability problems and responses through capitalist ideals of profit maximization, competition, property rights, the commodification of nature, and an overemphasis on technological and market prescriptions which do not seek to address underlying conditions and mindsets that created, deepened, and/or expanded unsustainable practices.

Imperialism: the *ideology* that governs how colonizers settle in the lands of others (Kohn & Reddy, 2017) through various forms of power, such as organized structures (e.g., religion, military, political, economic), institutions, and discursive (Banerjee, 2008).

Just Sustainabilities (JS): an approach to pluriversality that examines sustainability issues through an inclusion and justice lens “to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems” through a ‘new economics’ (Agyeman et al., 2003, p. 5).

Non-Western: Asian, African, Latin American, and Caribbean countries and peoples; descendants from these regions living elsewhere; indigenous peoples of Western countries colonized by Europeans.

Person/People of color (PoC): those who self-identify as a person of color.

Postcolonialism/Postcolonial theory: *critiques* of colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism (Banerjee & Prasad, 2008).

Plurality: inclusion of perspectives typically excluded or overlooked (Escobar, 2018b; Mignolo, 2018).

Pluriversality: a decolonial approach to knowledge beyond the limited parameters of Western epistemology and hermeneutics to reflect multiple ways of knowing, thinking, and doing (Escobar, 2018b; Mignolo, 2018).

Mindset: attitudes and beliefs that inform motivations, behaviors, and how one makes sense of the world (Dweck & Yeager, 2019).

Multinational Corporations (MNCs): firms that have assets in more than one country.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs): from a Canadian context, businesses with less than 500 employees (Government of Canada, 2022).

Spirituality: an “attitude toward life, making sense of life, relating to others, and seeking unity with the transcendent” (Del Rio & White, 2012, p. 123).

Sustainable Development and Sustainability: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43) through the pillars of social, environmental, and economic. In academic and mainstream discourse, sustainable development and sustainability are used interchangeably (Banerjee, 2003; Purvis et al., 2019).

Sustainability Management: how an organization manages, views, and responds to sustainability issues and activities related to their operations (Starik & Kanashiro, 2013).

Western/European: European people and countries; descendants from European civilizations that live in colonized and other lands.