

A CASE FOR COMPLEXITY:
CONTEXTUALIZING PLACES OF LEARNING
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

by

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Abstract

Our collective world currently resides in a time of far-reaching environmental precarity. Now more than ever, educational institutions are faced with an unprecedented responsibility to encourage students to foster relationships with the environment and inspire their responses for transformative change. The under-researched yet rapidly expanding field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS) has emerged as a platform to achieve this among young learners. However, the majority of literature in the field of ECEfS is underpinned by simplistic representations of “children’s connection to nature” in their learning environments. In a field that claims to promote understanding the interconnectedness of the systems of which we are a part (i.e. the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainability) there is a significant lack of research that critically explores the complexities of learning environments as these connections are being formed.

Given an even greater lack of ECEfS research being conducted in diverse communities across cultures, this thesis details research conducted in 2017 with the Early Years Program at Green School Bali; a world-renowned sustainability-oriented international school in Indonesia. My research was conducted through a social constructionist theoretical framework and blended methodological approach (nested case study, grounded theory, and ethnography). My qualitative data, collected over six months of immersive fieldwork, combines participant observation with children ages three to six years old; formal and informal teacher and administrator interviews; document analysis; and personal reflection. The findings were clarified through thematic analysis and writing as inquiry.

Presented in narrative form, the findings from this research analyze the context of the school at large (Green School in the context of Bali) and within the Early Years Program (as part of Green School). I complicate three broad themes (Setting, Culture, Curriculum) to illustrate the paramount need to incorporate critical and contextualized place-based learning in order to improve theory, research and practice in ECEfS. As schools aim to promote sustainability agendas worldwide, it is imperative to understand the complexities inherent in our leaning environments, and the implications this has regarding children’s relationships within the multifaceted environments in which they are a part.

Lay Summary

As our collective world faces wide-spread environmental precarity, educational institutions are now faced with an unprecedented responsibility to encourage students to foster relationships with the environment and inspire responses for change. To achieve this among young learners, my research in the emergent field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS) seeks to understand how diverse educational contexts shape young learner’s relationships to their multifaceted environments. Given the vast underdevelopment of ECEfS research in diverse contexts, I spent six months conducting qualitative fieldwork in 2017 at world-renowned Green School in Bali, Indonesia through daily participant observation with preschool-aged children, teacher and administrative interviews, document analysis and written personal reflection. The narrative presentation of research findings challenges the over-simplified relationship between “children’s connection to nature” often represented in literature and demonstrates the paramount need to incorporate critical and contextualized place-based learning to improve theory, research and practice in ECEfS.

Preface

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List of Abbreviations

ECE: Early Childhood Education
ECEfS: Early Childhood Education for Sustainability
EE: Environmental Education
EfS: Education for Sustainability
EYP: Early Years Program
GSB: Green School Bali

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Utah: The beautiful birthplace, the forever home, the touchstone. Whose many American-Western cultures ignited my curiosity about humans and the landscapes of which they are a part. Whose sandstone bluffs and open skies embody my soul.

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Introduction



Figure 1.1 Projectile (top right)
Figure 1.2 Mesa (bottom left)
Figure 1.3 Yucca (bottom right)

Positionality Statement

When my mother was pregnant
She dug a hole in the red sand earth
And in it rested her belly, ripe with new life.
I was conceived and incubated in the desert
Within both mother's bodies
Surrounded by a landscape
That breathes the magnificent light of all sunrises in one breath.

I was nude much of my infancy in the wilderness.
The breeze against my body
Christened my new skin with heat from a golden sun.
Wading beneath cottonwood trees in shallow streams
Holding my parent's two index fingers
Gazing skyward at their heavy bark
Cracked and creviced like the land from which they grew.

I learned to walk
Over white sand creek beds, smoothed lava stones
Around yucca plants and cryptobiotic soil
Through scrub cactus and red ant hills.
I learned to wander amongst gnarled, scattered piñon trees
Glittering high alpine aspen forests
Enveloped in a land infused by wild sagebrush.

I would sit in the mud with my mother
Digging thick earth from riverbeds
Black and brown silk smeared over large rocks.
She taught me names of plants as we gathered
Indian paintbrush, Mormon tea, catspaw, penstemon
And pressed only the most beautiful pebbles, leaves, and blooms into the clay
As the afternoon sun hung eternally content in the sky.

My father taught me how to scan parched earth for chert chips and projectile points
Tracing my fingertips around sharp edges
Of translucent glass-like rock.
I identified shards of pottery
White and black painted ochre clay
Straight lines and organic curves
Under chalky grey trees struck by lightning.

Hiking through hidden valleys
Adorned with pictographs, petroglyphs
Smudged and scratched into a sandstone canvas.
I held heavy stones smoothed from grinding rice grass into flour
Wooden ladders leading into cliffside dwellings
Small corncobs chewed, scattered
Preserved over centuries in arid stasis.

I was raised amongst multitudes of civilizations
In a place layered with story.
The land sang a song
Reverberating within the rivers of wind
Where the shrill call of red tail hawks echoed against still canyons
Ancient footpaths weaved over and under arches
That cascaded into an expansive skyline.

Symphonies of crickets and coyotes filled the breath
Where Ute, Paiute, and Anasazi before them
Chanted their stories into the night sky.
I danced among a living history
Learning, in time, the connectedness of each grain of sand
Melting with the sun into the distant horizon
As my young soul howled at the rising moon, anticipating rain.

Thunder took its earthly form as water
Flash floods coursed through the landscape
After the squall line swelled with darkness.
Boulders, tree trunks crashed downstream
New ravines cut ranchers off from their cattle
Shifting all life into new forms.
Rapid movement indifferent to resistance.

After a storm I would marvel
At the flushes of technicolor lichen
The contrast of the painted turquoise sunset
Stretching over umber pillars of rock
Streaked in black, mineral desert varnish.
Reality was constructed and reconstructed
With fleeting, transient weather.

I would squat, examine the earth after cloudbursts.
Individual droplets of water
Created small bowl-like circles on the top layer of sand.
I picked them up, just to let them fall
Their infinitesimal pieces all separate, but one
Crumbling in my palms
Drying to powder, before returning to the ground.

I would inhale cool, damp air – blink –
And exhale dry heat.
Even after heavy rainfall
My feet only sunk an inch into the wet earth
Before reaching dusty sand again.
The surface changed while the core remained.
Water would evaporate, and life would go on, reshaped.

Positionality Discussion

The environment is important. Education is important. I grew up in a family guided by these two truths. An educator and a conservationist raised me. From a young age I was encouraged to be inquisitive, mindful, and creative as I pieced together my existence exploring place in the American West. I formed a deep-rooted relationship with a landscape that winds through granite peaks and dusty red rock desert – one exposed to softness, sharp edges, unbelievable beauty and unbearable pain. I grew into existence rooted in the dynamism of “place” - the encompassing term for the perceptual, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological realities of any given environment (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 619). My lived experiences of deep ecological connectivity in the Utah western wilderness provided a foundational relationship with the natural world, and all that it encompassed. In nature, this relationship is painted with chalky oranges and deep viridian hues, lightning shows over desolate plateaus, and resounding silence. Personally, the relationship is storied with challenge, solace, and respect. Culturally, the relationship is one layered with religious colonization of Indigenous communities by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, conservative state and private control over land and resource extraction, and small pockets of counter-culture activism. With gratitude I draw continual inspiration from complex landscapes that simultaneously drive my spirit and academic endeavors. What a privilege to have spent my youth crawling on sandstone bluffs, rubbing sage between my hands, watching the sun melt into the dusty horizon as the coyotes begin to howl at the rising moon. What a privilege to find myself in graduate school where the land along the ocean is painted in rich cyan: complementary yet opposite of the red earth where the greater half of my soul resides.

This type of poetic connection to place in the North American west is indeed privileged in our increasingly polluted, populated, depleted, unequal social-global reality. Throughout my life, I have been exposed to expansive wild land; I have been introduced to these places by adults with their own solid value sets related to nature; I have had access to education and support to pursue fields of work in education and environmentalism; I have, I have, I have. I acknowledge that this thesis is written through my own lens of experience, abundance, and undeniable privilege to have been able to develop a relationship to place in this way.

Conceptions of ‘place’ and ‘the environment’ and relationships within vary widely for children and adults worldwide; both constructs are culturally and individually loaded and therefore ultimately elude a tidy definition (Dobson, 1999). While my experience in what I understand as the

environment may have aided in developing positive relationships with ‘place’ – this is not always true; especially those who live in/with vulnerable landscapes. “In the past 20 years, 4.2 billion people have been affected by weather-related disasters, including a significant loss of lives. Developing countries are the most affected by climate change impacts... families living in poverty systematically occupy the least desirable land [due] to damage from climate hazards, such as mud slides, periods of abnormally hot water, water contamination and flooding” (United Nations, 2016). Communities residing in low-elevation coastal zones and semi-arid deserts for example, are often disproportionately subject to the effects of climate change. Large populations of people are forced to migrate away from their homes as “climate refugees” to seek places unplagued by drought, sea-level rise, or other extreme weather events. Further, political and economic instability in war-torn countries can shade the natural landscape as violent and threatening to young children and families alike. Inner-city communities experiencing marginalization and restriction to land access are also subject to more complicated relationships to place, even here in Canada.

In Vancouver, the Downtown East Side is home to a vibrant, diverse community that faces innumerable challenges due to historical colonization and current urban real estate development growth spurring extreme socioeconomic stratification. The land and its rich ecological and cultural heritage are being built over and into an expanding cement city upon the unceded territory of the Musqueam and other Coast Salish First Nations people. Since moving to Vancouver in 2015, I have worked with different organizations focusing on educational program planning within the DTES community. Here, where I have learned and worked in graduate school, has been a complex example of how place is understood and shaped in theory and practice. Vancouver embodies historically complex inequalities, modern sociopolitical dynamics, and the fissures of educational, social and economic marginalization. Like many neighbourhoods worldwide, streets characterized by poverty and drug economies on the DTES also pose extraordinary challenges in helping young learners foster relationships to a largely inaccessible natural environment. For example, in the classroom of the community center where I worked is a picture frame displaying syringes, alcohol swabs, caps, condoms, wrappers, needles. These are all items found near the community center – on sidewalks, in grassy fields, in park playgrounds – and ones that young children, from a young age, learn not to touch. For children with whom I worked, their developing conceptions of their environment is layered with apprehensive distance on a daily basis. Indeed, relationships with and between all things vary. It is with this ongoing, complex understanding of place in the communities of which I am a

part, and my position within and relationships to these places, that I explore place on a personal and academic level.

As a human being, I am shaped by the intersectionality of experience, communities, cultures, and place. As an emerging researcher, my critical reflections are influenced by the tools I have developed and been provided as a student. Combining my undergraduate degrees in Cultural Anthropology and International Studies allowed me to examine our world through diverse lenses. International Studies' introduction to political science, business, foreign language and literature, coupled with global exploration and holistic meaning-making of Anthropology, produced a rich introduction to the humanities and social sciences. Each degree provided glimpses into compelling facets of the systems humanity experiences on small and global scales. I am interested in education as an underlying current that simultaneously heals and carries forth the turbulences of interconnectedness.

Post-graduation I was fortunate to explore early childhood education in a hands-on context as an assistant preschool teacher in two private schools in Salt Lake City, Utah. During the transition into teaching preschool for three years, I came to [re]learn that for young children, every lived moment is an experiential learning process as they expand into the world through pure rage, and pain, and laughter, and happiness, and wonder.

At my school during the seasonal shift when sweet spring begins to catch fire into a blazing summer, we toted and dragged buckets and hoses under the awning into the sandbox. We spent hours digging curved channels, bridges, drainages, diversions; guessing what would happen when the great flow of liquid was pumped into the topographic container of sand. Bridges collapsed. Leaves blew in. Spiders would be found and moved to plants beyond the metal gate: "Off you go into your new life!" I heard a student whisper. Someone would snatch a shovel. Someone would step on an embankment. There were onlookers and singers and organizers and doers and wanderers. Sand was in every crevice of every surface; we all got wet. This tiny pocket of earth connected land, each other, the wind, the sun; hours passed in a matter of moments, shaping and being shaped by the flow of water. (Personal Reflection, 2017)

Moments like these - where I was mainly an observer, sometimes a facilitator, and always a learner with children - seemed to nullify the power dynamics of age and experience as an early childhood educator. Developmental 'wisdom' that sometimes accompanies adulthood becomes irrelevant watching children's embodied connections to existence - a true practice in being. We are all learning about and experiencing weather, teamwork, compromise, innovation, understanding, experimentation, awe. Indeed, it often seems reality in early childhood is still illuminated beyond

what the eye can see; beyond what we as adults have compartmentalized, categorized and explained away; beyond what we say and hear and write. Yet the simplified narratives that exist in early childhood (Kocher & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2011) – of children being vessels to be filled with knowledge, of innocence with youth and contamination with growth - are explanations devoid of complexity. Not only are these views simplistic in terms of viewing children, they then breed oversimplified (and vastly under-researched) understandings of the contexts in which children learn – and how children’s relationships to these places play out in/for/with the natural environment over a lifetime.

I focus my attention as an individual and a researcher to the complex relationship-oriented intersection of early childhood and environmental education. While I approach my research through lived experience, professional endeavors, and academic training, I am aware that my close proximity with, and investment in, the issues I study necessitates a more critical lens in conducting and producing knowledge. My position of privilege as a white, university educated student and educator from the United States is only exacerbated by studying an area in education (preschool) that most families cannot afford, if they have access to it at all. On a global scale, preschool itself is a privileged institution. Given my positionality and research topic, my research may only be relevant to those who are of similar backgrounds to my own, especially if my results are geared towards finding ways to adapt successful aspects of environmental programs abroad to North American schools. With this acknowledgement and critical reflection that I strive to constantly reconceptualize and deepen my approach to, and interaction with, these topics.

Rapid, negative human impact on the places that shaped me in one way or another shape us all. I believe the multidisciplinary study of human relationships to place is at the center of all environmentally-oriented efforts to alleviate strain upon and improve our common world. Indeed, my reasons for approaching this research are heavily influenced by my epistemological/ontological roots: I want the places where I grew up, and the environments that stretches far across the planet, to be understood, respected, approached with an ethic of care, and honored with an undeniable recognition that we, and the places in which we learn on this earth, are inextricable. It is my hope that understanding how education plays a role in the formation of these relationships – whether they are within dusty red rock bluffs, city parks, palm forests or beyond – will illuminate deeper understanding of our connection to place during the most formative years of life: early childhood.

Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS) & Green School Bali

This chapter provides a contextualization of the environmental and sustainability education literature in which this thesis resides, focusing on the emergence of the field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS). Given the field's nascence, it is important to provide a foundation for how ECEfS emerged, what practical and academic inquiry has been considered thus far, and what directions the field as a whole is beginning to explore. I then problematize an overarching, dominant discourse of "connection to nature" within the field by identifying an oversimplified relationship between "child" and "nature" that is perpetuated within current research. I will then discuss the importance of and contributions within my research to the growing inquiry within ECEfS. While this chapter contains an introductory overview of literature from the field of ECEfS, given the blended methodological approach of my research of case study, ethnography, and grounded theory (see Chapter 2), the literature review is embedded within and expanded upon in the findings chapter (see Chapter 3).

Environmental Education

As societies place more significance upon the pending and ongoing transformation of the natural environment through human-triggered strain, education plays a fundamental role in shaping how humans interact with the environment – and in finding solutions for problems facing the earth at large. As the natural environment across the globe experiences increased extraction and depletion of resources; as climate rises and communities seek refuge from the rising tides, heat waves, and access to water; as population rates spill into the higher billions; as industry charges forth at the demand of consumerism; as pollution infiltrates our skies and oceans and landmasses; as urbanization creeps further into open spaces; as scientists warn, repeatedly, the impending extinction of our natural world as humankind knows it (Ripple et al., 2017) – we arrive in a time of serious, far-reaching societal examination of the world we have been creating, the world we want to create, and how education plays a role in this process. Environmental education (EE), broadly defined as “a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, and develop skills and understanding about how to address global challenges” (North American Association for Environmental Education, 2017) is becoming more relevant and fundamental to determine how humans conceive of—and alter their interactions with—the natural world.

In the broadest sense, environmental education is about building connections with the world around us through teaching and learning in the field of education. While environmental education

encompasses learning about earth systems, scientific literacy, and human connection to natural and built environments, the discipline goes further than merely learning “in” the environment (as in outdoor education), “about” (as in scientific education), and “for” (as in activist-oriented education) the environment (Davis, 2009). Ultimately, environmental education requires a shift into a ‘frame of mind’ (Bonnett, 2002) that “requires a deep understanding of ourselves, our neighbours, our societal and cultural processes and how we are connected” (Lang, 2007, p. 6). The expanding views of EE now include a greater understanding of interconnectivity and the beneficial outcomes for both children and the environment when fostering these relationships.

Sustainable Development

In the same era that environmental education became an international topic of importance (Tbilisi Declaration, 1977) to better understand human relationships with the earth, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development began promoting the concept of “sustainable development.” Sustainable development, broadly defined as “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), acts as an organizing principle that focused on the sustainable expansion of economies globally. In the past decades, sustainable development has grown to incorporate the interrelated facets of economy, culture, and the environment regarding nation-wide and international policy planning and growth. Sustainable development goals demand interdisciplinary action across all sectors of society to ensure global ecological balance to combat the rapid destruction of the natural environment while providing equitable growth for economies worldwide.

Education for Sustainability

As international policymakers began to incorporate sustainability initiatives into large sectors of their governments to reduce human impact on the environment, so too did schools into their programming. As a component of “environmental education,” “education for sustainability” (EFS) developed as an outcome of these large-scale efforts to facilitate changes in how we conceptualize and interact with the environment, as well as to make changes to alleviate strain caused by these relationships. A 2009 report titled “Learning for a Sustainable World” (Wals, 2009) helped contextualize the relationship between sustainable development and education. In this report, professor of socio-ecological transformative learning Arjen Wals stated: “Across the globe there is a

surge in interest in sustainability issues in governments, communities and organizations and in business and industry... In response, new policies, legislation, forms of governance at the local, regional, national and international level and, indeed, new forms of education and learning are emerging that can help facilitate such changes” (Wals, 2009, p. 7). Education for sustainability, therefore, takes an active role in “finding solutions” and “facilitating changes” within society to “promote prosperity while protecting the planet” (United Nations, 2018). Specifically, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) aims to

Transform society by reorienting education and help people develop knowledge, skills, values and behaviours needed for sustainable development. It is about including sustainable development issues, such as climate change and biodiversity into teaching and learning. Individuals are encouraged to be responsible actors who resolve challenges, respect cultural diversity and contribute to creating a more sustainable world. (UNESCO, 2018)

In this statement, education for sustainability promotes the understanding of earth and human interconnectivity to economic, cultural, and environmental systems. Therefore, EfS requires a transdisciplinary approach to be successful. This transdisciplinarity “creates new knowledge, processes and perspectives that go ‘beyond’ the disciplines and offers new ways of looking at and responding to issues and problems” (Davis, 2015, p. 17). Education for sustainability as a social movement requires the collective effort between many systems of society, and between all people, in order to bring about positive change in our many environments. Contributing to these efforts is becoming a priority of governments and within public and private schools at every age level of education.

Early Childhood Education for Sustainability

Our current reality demands that people worldwide address environmental degradation, and human interaction with the earth, occurring on a global scale. Increasingly, issues surrounding environmental sustainability are seen not simply as the responsibility of a few, or between those in specific disciplines, but of whole societies (United Nations, 2016). Simultaneously, views of children are undergoing a major transformation in the twenty first century within countries of all economic statuses, ushering forth the notion that people of all ages are capable of contributing to society (Ebrahim, 2011; Mackey, 2012; Percy-Smith & Burns, 2013; Davis & Elliott, 2014; Caiman & Lundgard, 2014; Roopnarine et al., 2018 to name a few). The paradigmatic shift towards viewing

young children as ‘capable’ actors in the world around them is a significant development worldwide and is reflected in internationally ratified treaties and documents put forth by the United Nations over past decades. For example, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, solidifying 195 countries’ commitment to adapt “a vision of the child as an individual and a member of a family and a community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development” (UNICEF, 2014). Articles 13 and 29 of the UNCRC emphasize a shift in agency, education, and education for the environment in particular.

Understanding young children as contributors to sustainable change aligns with the United Nations’ outreach regarding Education for Sustainability (EfS). Education for sustainability aims to empower “learners of any age in any education setting, to transform themselves and the society they live in...to be ‘global citizens’ who engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to creating a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world” (UNESCO, 2018). The field of early childhood education in particular has been a central focus of EfS in recent years as a critical component in furthering a global sustainability agenda. In a 2018 Handbook of International Perspectives in Early Childhood Education, a collective of researchers and authors confirmed “...we must begin in the early childhood years” due to “mounting scientific evidence suggests that early childhood education (ECE) provides one of the best mechanisms for...achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” (Roopnarine et. al, 2018, p.1).

Early childhood education for sustainability (ECEfS) is a relatively new field that blends efforts being made by advocates of both education for sustainability and early childhood education (ECE) (an area of education encompassing young children from birth to age eight). Stemming from the foundation of environmental education, ECEfS “can be described as the enactment of transformative, empowering and participative education around sustainability issues, topics and experiences within early education contexts” (Davis & Elliott, 2014, p.22). ECEfS promotes the overarching international effort to incorporate environmental education “at all levels—local, national, regional, and international—and for all age groups both inside and outside the formal school system” (Tbilisi, 1977).

Julie Davis, Australian academic and foundational researcher in the ECEfS movement, delineates the construction of ECEfS from that of nature-based, outdoor, or environmental education by conceptualizing ECEfS as focusing on a ‘transformative’ element within educational

contexts. The view of children and children's learning, in a 'transformational' sense, moves beyond solely understanding children learning *in* or *about* the natural world: "While playing and learning in nature remains highly valued, this newer conceptualization refers to a transformative early childhood education that values, encourages and supports children as problem-seekers, problem solvers and action-takers around sustainability issues and topics related to their own lives" (Davis, 2009, p. 232). Transformation, therefore, is not only occurring with children *in* their learning contexts; it is also happening when children *take part in* their learning contexts to create transformation. ECEfS begins to take form in programming as a way to involve children in the active process of contributing to and improving the environments, and society at large, at the youngest of ages.

However, despite the growing interest from practitioners, policy-makers, and schools to implement and study programming at the intersection of ECEfS, "a research-base to understand, build upon, and critique these developments [was] absent" (Davis, 2009, p. 229). Until recently, ECEfS to a great extent was non-existent within the academic field. Davis found that "early childhood education researchers had not engaged with environmental/sustainability issues and environmental education researchers had not focused their attention on very young children and their educational settings" (Somerville & Williams, 2015, p.103). The examples that Davis found of new programming and policy regarding integrated sustainability initiatives within an early childhood context were largely practitioner-based (occurring with teachers who were not systematically documenting or widely sharing their experiences). Davis (2009) noted that another reason why environmental or sustainability-related research may not have been taken up widely in early childhood education, compared to those of elementary-aged and older children, are the "practical and ethical" barriers, such as consent, protection strategies, (apparent) limited verbal and writing skills, that come with "conducting research with/on/about very young children" (p. 235). As is commonly the case with early childhood education funding, resource allocation for the early years tends to be less prioritized. To fill the gap in research, Davis encouraged "individuals, research centres, research funding bodies, professional associations or other groups with an interest in young children" (p. 236) to examine young children's knowledge and capabilities, school and community programs, and exploratory research in the transformative realm of sustainability-oriented early childhood educational contexts.

Davis' seminal work in 2009 acted as the wide-spread academic request to undertake research in the nascent field of ECEfS. Since then, researchers and practitioners are beginning to heed the call. At the same time as continued international policy frameworks continued to expand to

incorporate ECEfS, so too did research publications focusing on sustainability education and early childhood education; the number of publications has not only expanded into new areas of inquiry, they have nearly doubled in the major journals previously surveyed (Somerville & Williams, 2015). Since Davis' 2009 report, Australian ECEfS scholars Margaret Somerville and Carolyn Williams (2015) aimed to define ECEfS further and identify emergent themes within research publications within the field. Somerville and Williams' review of literature found specific "underpinning assumptions that tend to shape the field as a whole" (Somerville & Williams, 2015, p. 111). Three discourses that were foundational throughout the literature surveyed were Children's Rights, Post-human Frameworks, and Connection to Nature.

Children's Rights

The discourse of "children's rights" stems from policy-driven backing by organizations such as the United Nations, and organizational desire to understand the view of children as capable actors for sustainable causes in their educational settings and beyond. Examples of this type of policy include the Organisation Mondiale Por l'Education Prescolaire (OMEP; World Organization for Early Childhood Education), and The European Panel on Sustainable Development (EPSD) in 2010. Each of these groups focused on promoting and clarifying points made by the UNCRC; that "even very young children are capable of sophisticated thinking in relation to socio-environmental issues. They have the right to have a voice and the earlier ESD ideas are introduced the greater their impact and influence can be" (Somerville & Williams, 2015, p. 103). Various provincial, state, and national curriculums now explicitly require goals of sustainability education to be met in practice. For example, the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) mandates incorporating environmental education throughout their national programming including ECE. In Canada, the province of British Columbia's Early Learning Framework states "Natural environments may play a particularly important role in promoting children's early learning. Exposure to natural environments strengthens children's relationship to nature, building the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual connections that are a necessary motivation for environmental stewardship" (BC Ministry of Education, 2008). In 2018, BC's new curriculum places specific focus on "contributing to and caring for the environment" as one of students' core competencies with children as young as kindergarten (BC Ministry of Education, n.d.) and earlier.

Examples of research in the area of children's rights and exemplifying how children are supported in their educational settings to contribute to their environments actively include Glynne

Mackey's case-study of an environmental-curriculum centered city kindergarten in New Zealand. Here she found children three to four years old expressed competencies in their ability to advocate for and communicate solutions to environmental problems, such as urging their parents to purchase compostable paper products instead of plastic items to pack in their lunchboxes (Mackey, 2012). This type of action is mirrored in research with preschoolers in Sweden where a group of students between the ages of four and five years old observed a bird's nest outside of their classroom which was next to a large construction site in their neighbourhood suburb. The children expressed concern for the chicks' ability to rest with the noise of the surrounding machinery and, through an unprompted conversation, they discussed the issue and resolved to move the nest to a new location (Caiman & Lundegard, 2013). While reports of children represented as capable, contributing members within their environments are growing research, "studies within the global discourses of 'Children's rights' tend to lack empirical grounding in local places and are characterized by advocacy rather than research that can provide evidence for practice (Somerville & Williams, 2015, p. 112).

Post-humanism

Comprising the smallest amount of current research in ECEfS, post-humanist philosophy "constitutes the human as (a) physically, chemically, and biologically enmeshed and dependent on the environment; (b) moved to action through interactions that generate affects, habits, and reason; and (c) possessing no attribute that is uniquely human but is instead made up of a larger evolving ecosystem" (Lehman & Keeling, 2018, p. 1). Post-humanism conceptualizes young children and the environment through the "concept of intra-action" (Barad, 2003; Hultman & Lenz-Taguchi, 2010; Rossholt, 2012), or belonging within (as opposed to separate from) the earth. This concept of connectedness with young children and the "more-than-human world" (such as components of nature like plants and animals) challenges issues of agency, anthropocentrism, and the nature/culture binary often represented in theory and research.

While post-humanist premises of intra-connectedness are interwoven into other areas of early childhood and environmental education frameworks, such as Indigenous pedagogies (Duhn, 2012a; Duhn, 2012b; Nxumalo, 2017; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013; Cajete, 1994; deMarrais, 1994), inquiry in this area is "generally disconnected from the issues of education for sustainability and in this sense absent in the field of sustainability education as such" (Somerville & Williams, 2015, p. 112). However, according to my own review of literature since beginning this study as well as fruitful conversations with colleagues at the University of British Columbia (Claudia Diaz, Paulina Semenc,

and Dr. Iris Berger to name a few), post-humanist work is being taken up with enthusiasm by researchers interested in young children and the environment.

Connection to Nature

Within the three categories of current research as outlined by Somerville & Williams (2015), “children’s rights” and “connection to nature” dominated nearly all of the theoretical discourses in the field. Much of the children’s rights and environmental sustainability literature, as mentioned above, is backed by the promotion of children’s “connection to nature” first and foremost; that in order for children to make changes within their environment, they first need to foster a connection to their surroundings.

Some of the most prominent examples of fostering a “connection to nature” in Early Childhood Education reside in the study of outdoor education or nature-based programming. Forest schools are some of the most well-known examples of outdoor, nature-based education that we have as ECE teachers and researchers. Initially popularized in Scandinavia, children play, nap, eat, explore – all outside – in all types of weather (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2017). Children learn to negotiate their developing boundaries (i.e., assessing risk, developing fine and gross motor skills in variable landscapes) (Sandseter, 2009) in outdoor environments that test and encourage experiential growth with each snowfall, scraped knee, and gentle breeze. In more recent decades, Forest and similar types of outdoor, nature-based early childhood schools have spread across Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand that aim to promote a connection to nature in particular. Total immersion in nature, compared to incorporating components of nature found in other ECE programs, becomes the primary foundation for learning within these educational settings. Research in the areas of forest schools, nature-based education and outdoor education has had a significant impact in literature in ECE and has prompted foundational studies into the many benefits of outdoor learning and nature contact with children (O’Brien & Murray, 2007; Keniger et al., 2013; Elliot & Chancellor, 2014; Chawla, 2015; Änggård, 2010).

Research shows numerous benefits with children who have consistent contact with nature in Forest or similar types of immersion schools, including implications for improving individual, social, and environmental spheres of life. In many contexts, children’s consistent contact with nature can lead to improved physiological health (i.e. improved eyesight, decreased asthma symptoms, better coordination, and balance), improved cognitive function (i.e., better concentration, improved cooperation, increased creativity), and improved psychological well-being (i.e., greater sense of self-

esteem and improved mood) (Chawla, 2015; Keniger et al., 2013). Beyond children's individual health, studies show that children's interactions in nature can connect children with social aspects of their life. Nature can "facilitate social interaction in adults and children, foster social empowerment, enhance interracial interaction, and promote social cohesion and support" (Keniger et al., 2013, p. 925). Moreover, research advocates that the more exposure children have to the natural environment, the more likely they are to develop a sense of empathy, sympathy and care for it during the early years and beyond (Schultz, 2000; Berenguer, 2007; Chawla, 2009). The multidisciplinary literature that has emerged in past decades, as well as practitioner implementation of nature-based programming, has not only helped legitimize the field of Early Childhood Education and its relationship to learning within the natural environment; it has pushed forth the narrative of supporting children's "connections to nature."

When beginning my graduate studies in environmental and sustainability education, the "connection to nature" narrative was implicit in academic research and practitioner discourse; it was the core of all ECE efforts related to teaching and learning about/in/for/with the environment. In their review of literature in the field of ECEfS, Somerville & Williams validate this overarching reality:

The articles that are informed by *connection to nature* discourses represent a continuing tradition of environmental education in which the fundamental aim is to connect children to the natural world, to teach them about its values and to act for its conservation (e.g. Chan et al., 2009; Gambino et al., 2009; Gulay Ogelman, 2012; Hadzigeorgiou et al., 2011; Kahrman-Ozturk et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2010; Prince, 2010). These articles are embedded in local environments and places, with mainly small scale case studies with a focus on a single program or learning about a single species, such as evaluating children's learning about bilbies (Gambino et al., 2009) or teaching the value of trees (Hazigeorgiou et al., 2011). (Somerville & Williams, 2015, p. 109)

Indeed, there is a "continuing tradition of environmental education" to "connect children to the natural world" that is heavily emphasized in the field of ECEfS.

However, the 'connection' literature is rooted in an assumption that there is first, and foremost, a *dis*-connection between children and their environments (Somerville & Williams, 2015). This belief is firmly rooted in the western narrative educators and researchers alike promote; we are distanced or detached from the exposure and lived experiences that tie children and the environment together; and that many societies in our modern world have either created or encountered barriers to perpetuating a connection between children and a natural learning environment.

Disconnection to Nature

“Disconnection” is a pervasive yet illusive belief amongst western-trained academics and educators studying facets of the environment. The description asserts that issues societies worldwide are facing (such as depletion of natural resources, and urbanization and development of wild spaces) are products of having lost touch with our natural world. Indeed, environmentalists have been issuing warnings about issues surrounding the earth’s deterioration since the mid 1900s. In the field of environmental education, it is almost impossible to view the current ecological circumstances of our earth without reflecting on large-scale warnings of such disconnection as biologist and conservation activist Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962). The sustainability movement at large – promoted by the United Nations’ sustainability policies – can be seen as framed by the belief that our current practices are ‘unsustainable’ and therefore leading our global society down a disconnected, destructive path for humankind, and the natural world as humankind knows it. These ideas have infiltrated early childhood and have been widely disseminated in academic and popular discourse by authors such as Richard Louv who coined the term “Nature Deficit Disorder” in his acclaimed book “Last Child in the Woods” (2008). In this vein, children are growing up in a profoundly new era of ‘disconnect’; the modern world is often seen as a threat to children’s development of connections with their surrounding natural environments. While academics, practitioners, and families alike place various blame for this disconnect (i.e. technology, social isolation, urbanization, development, pollution, war...) the pervasive consensus represented in ECEfS literature is that, no matter what the reason, this disconnect is happening – if not happened already. The idea that children are lacking exposure to “nature”, and therefore becoming increasingly separated from the natural environment, has permeated – to various degrees of rigorous inquiry – societal and research-based questioning about the kind of environments in which we are raising and educating our children.

As identified in Somerville and Williams’ (2015) review of research, scientific literature and discourse within the field of ECEfS report on children’s “connection to nature” as a generally-held but rarely examined belief. This type of “unexamined assumption” asserts “children” and “the environment” are two separate entities that have, or have the potential to, become “disconnected” from each other. As Somerville & Williams explain it: “the understanding of sustainability learning is shaped by an understanding of ‘the environment’ as something outside of, and separate from, everyday human social life in places and communities” (p. 110). Therefore, research in the field of

ECEfS has been oversimplified and framed in a way that examines understanding both children and nature as two separate entities. In a field that promotes understanding the interconnectedness of the systems of which we are a part (i.e. the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainability) it is rare to find ECEfS research framed in a way that explores the complexities of connections instead of the simplistic disconnected relationship between “children” and “nature” within early childhood education for sustainability settings.

However, the field of ECEfS is beginning to explore research and programming that aims to encompass multitudes of “connection to nature” within the social, economic, and environmental worlds of sustainability-based education initiatives worldwide. Sustainability and sustainability education “is concerned, therefore, not only with the state of the natural world but also with poverty, population, consumption, gender equity, Indigenous issues, peace and reconciliation, community life and human health. It is about how we all live our lives now and into the future” (Davis, 2015, p. 11), and it is about understanding *how* and in what contexts we are learning to live these lives.

Foundational scholars in the ECEfS movement, such as Julie Davis and Sue Elliott, continue to provide insights into such expanding programming and research. In the first-ever published collection of ECEfS research in international contexts, *Research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: International perspectives and provocations*, Davis and Elliott (2014) offer practical and theoretical insights into the ECEfS movement in international settings. This collective of research covers areas regarding ethics and values, historical and sociocultural contexts, and curriculum and pedagogy. They acknowledge that while their research and a large portion of the ECEfS research has taken place within the historical and sociocultural contexts of Australia, “authors in other parts of the world provide stories of the unique impacts of their own local contexts in enabling or deterring paradigm shifts in the field” (Davis & Elliott, 2014, p.10). Michiko Inoue (2014) discusses ECE in Japan as a catalyst for creating sustainable societies; Glynne Mackey (2014) continues work on ECE teacher education in relation to sustainability in New Zealand; Barbara Sageidet (2014) offers new insights into systematic ECEfS programming in Norway.

Research that goes beyond the assumption of “connection/disconnection to nature” is beginning to be conducted internationally; more diverse voices are being accounted for, and the topic of “disconnection/connection” in ECEfS is receiving more well-rounded treatment. However, there is a need for a wider scope for research being done in ECEfS in diverse contexts to further this discussion. Davis & Elliott (2014) echo Davis’ 2009 initial call for examination into research in

the field of ECEfS, but this time with a more specific aim: “Now, however, we believe it is time to turn a more scholarly eye to what is being enacted and to explore approaches and practices more deeply and critically” (Davis & Elliott, 2014, p. 2).

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

Researchers emerge in an opportune time to explore diverse international communities working towards fostering relationships between children and/within their environments across cultures (Ardoin, Clark & Kelsey, 2013; Davis & Elliott, 2014) in the under-researched yet rapidly developing field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS). As the field of ECEfS continues to expand internationally, so too do early childhood educational models that aim to further sustainability education within their programming.

My research explores an exemplary educational model of sustainability education in action within an international Early Childhood Education program in Bali, Indonesia. The Early Years Program resides within the Green School Bali, acknowledged as one of the leading examples of how sustainability can be interwoven into the infrastructure, culture and curriculum of a school. Educators and families worldwide look to Green School as an institutional beacon for progressive programming and implementation of a sustainability-oriented agenda. Having gained accolades by the global north over a relatively short period of time, it is a truly unique educational model through which to explore programming with young learners.

Given the three current trends in ECEfS research (children’s rights, post-humanism approaches, and “connection to nature” discourses), I seek to examine ways Green School Bali’s Early Years Program fits into this developing literature base. In the broadest sense, I ask:

- In what ways does Green School Bali’s Early Years Program conceptualize and enact “children’s connection to nature” within the complex context of place? What implications does this have for children’s learning? What implications does this have for the greater learning environment?
- What roles do setting, culture, and curriculum play in shaping this connection?

Moving deeper into questioning the simplistic association between children’s “connection to nature” within the Early Childhood Education for Sustainability research and practice paradigm, my research aims to illuminate how programs are constructing relationships within their own complex places and environments and understand what the implications for young learners might be.

Overview of Green School Bali

My introduction to Green School provides a general overview of the institution within its setting of Bali. Although supplemented with curriculum documents that I obtained during or after fieldwork, the information I have compiled in this section reflects my general knowledge about the school prior to fieldwork. I offer a brief, incomplete, overview of Bali and the histories that have shaped the context in which Green School resides. I then recount the school's founding story, provide an overview of the physical campus, identify local and international populace that makes up the school community, as well as touch on the development and overarching values of the school's curriculum and pedagogy.

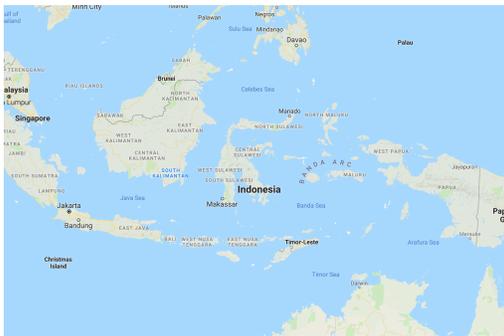


Figure 1.4 Map of Indonesia

Figure 1.5 Map of Bali, Indonesia

(Google Maps, 2018)

Bali. Indonesia and its more than 17,000 islands lay curved into the equatorial waters of the Pacific Ocean. Bali sits at the western end of the Lesser Sunda Islands in the Indonesian Archipelago between Java (to the west) and Lombok (to the east). Bali resides on the western side of The Wallace Line – a straight that runs between Bali and Lombok – that represents the physical faunal boundary between Australia and Asia; species of plants, weather patterns, and continental shelves differ within the small 35-kilometer expanse of sea. On this western side, Bali is renowned for its natural landscape: expansive beaches, tall waves, dense jungle, mountainous interior, warm tropical climate. Inextricable to the renowned landscape are the histories and practices of the Balinese people.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to around two-thirds of the world's Indigenous peoples. The human and social dimensions of the Asia-Pacific account for much of

the world's linguistic and cultural diversity, with approximately 280 million Indigenous peoples the custodians of the region's diverse lands and territories (United Nations Development Programme 2012). The geographic, human and social diversity of the Asia-Pacific parallels the continuing contribution of rich and distinct Indigenous knowledge, practices and perspectives that benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. (Miller, 2016b, p.35)

Since the arrival of Hindu influences from India around the first century, over 80% of the population practices a form of Balinese Hinduism (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010). Residing on a 5,780² km landmass, Bali's current 4,225,000 inhabitants represent Indonesia's largest Hindu population. The stories and animistic beliefs of the Indigenous Bali Aga (Indigenous Balinese people) are syncretic beliefs practiced along with the core worship of the Hindu Trinity (Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu who represent the manifestations of the supreme God Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa), is practiced to date. While forms of Balinese Hinduism have provided a continuous thread of spiritual and practical commonality throughout various phases of outside influences, the island and its communities have also experienced multiple eras of great change. Bali has experienced a history interlaced with Buddhist (approximately 800BCE) and, most recently, Islamic influences (as 87.2% of people in Indonesia now identify as Muslim) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). One of many significant impacts on the island was the Dutch colonization of Bali during the mid 1800s. Through a more than one hundred year stretch of time, fierce battles and bloody impositions stretched across the island; the Dutch strategically pitted the island's various regional kingdoms against each other in order to gain control of the island and incorporate it into an expanding colonial empire. The Dutch maintained political and economic control over the island until after World War II when the Netherlands recognized Indonesia's independence as a country in 1949. While perhaps a demographic religious anomaly in the current country of Indonesia, the island has undoubtedly experienced the repeated tides of change over time.

The dominant religious culture of Bali has traditionally operated through belief in and practice of the Hindu philosophy Tri Hita Karana. Combining three causes of prosperity or wellbeing, "the concept holds that God, humanity and nature are inseparably linked, and that happiness and prosperity can only be attained if all human beings live in balance and harmony with God, with other human beings and with the environment" (Kasa, 2011, p. 25). With each daily offering, each community gathering, and each temple celebration, the pursuit of the sacred flows through every action. Through the lens of what we've come to know as "sustainability", people of Bali have been applying the Tri Hita Karana philosophy to the interrelated preservation of social,

economic and environmental realities for centuries. A substantiated example is the Balinese *subak* system (water temple networks) that have been responsible for the successful management of watersheds. This system is comprised of socially-organized and spiritually-appointed water temples throughout the entirety of the landscape that sustain rice terraces and other agriculture on the rocky volcanic island. To date, many of these “agricultural areas are all still farmed in a sustainable way by local communities and their water supplies are democratically managed by the water temples” (UNESCO, 2016).

Contemporary anthropologist Henke Schulte Nordholt (2010) notes that Bali has become one of the most densely studied places in the world in the discipline of anthropology (p. 89). To date, a wide-reaching range of ethnographies have been conducted on facets such as (but not limited to) tourism, land management, and effects of historical and current colonization. However, accounts of the island from early western anthropologists have had a lasting impression on western thought about Bali and its inhabitants. Anthropologists such as Margaret Meade (1942), Gregory Bateson (1942; 1967) and Clifford Geertz (1959; 1966; 1972; 1980) who recorded kinship relations, religious symbolism, and agricultural practices within the culture in the early and mid 1900s introduced the island and its inhabitants as an “exoticized” location to the rest of the western world; showcasing a society observing hybrid animistic and Hindu beliefs, creating complex resource management systems, performing highly technical dance and instrumental artforms, producing skilled metal and wood carvings, all the while inhabiting a small, tropical island in the middle of the Pacific.

Today, similar images of Bali as a culturally and geographically unique travel destination are the driving force throughout the increasing promotion of the tourism industry; indeed, it is these types of “exoticized” images that still draw hundreds of people worldwide to visit Bali, as well as to live and learn at Green School. Encroaching urbanization, rural diversification, and international tourism itself place strain on the island’s resources and cultures. For example, tourism has replaced agriculture as Bali’s current largest source of economic income. This in turn threatens sociocultural institutions such as water temples (Lansing, 2006; Lorenzen, 2015); for example, as populations rise, rice terraces are destroyed to build housing or hotels. In addition, Indonesia at large has become the world’s largest ocean polluting country behind China (Lueng, 2016). Due to the small landmass of the island and its structural inability to accommodate for the amount of trash being produced, in 2018 Bali’s government declared a “garbage emergency” due to the [largely plastic] masses of waste collecting on the island’s shores (BBC, 2018). Island officials, in part due to initiatives such as “Bye Bye Plastic Bags” led by Green School students and families, is now working to ban plastic bags and

straws largely distributed within the tourism industry island wide. Population increase, and infrastructure expansion spurred from tourism, places immense pressure on the island community at large to address the negative environmental effects occurring on a rapidly increasing scale. Green School sits at the ideological and physical intersection of this international expansion and efforts to alleviate environmental strain.

School Founding. Nestled into the lush interior jungle of Bali resides a “bamboo cathedral” named Green School. Green School is many things to many people; it serves as a beacon for individuals and families seeking alternative ways to learn; an evolving model of curricular experimentation in “green” education; a place to expand thinking beyond the physical and ideological barriers of institutionalized school systems. It is picturesque and idealistic; a widely media-publicized progressive educational model centered upon promoting “sustainability” as a social agenda. The founding story is well-known and engrained as the foundation to the school’s narrative nearly ten years after the school’s opening.

Green School was founded by Canadian expatriate couple John and Cynthia Hardy who had built a monetarily successful jewelry business in Bali in the 1970s. After accumulating financial success in Bali, John Hardy publicly stated he wanted to “give back” to an island that he had come to call home. Moved by Al Gore’s environmental narrative in the movie “An Inconvenient Truth”, Hardy felt that in order to improve the condition of the planet, education needed to focus on creating ‘green leaders.’ Spurred by this drive, and his own troubled past with not fitting into formal schooling due to his own dyslexia diagnosis, Hardy set out to create an alternative educational model. Operating under Yayasan Kul-Kul, a non-profit he founded in order to acquire land on the island, Hardy invested in a dense jungle property where he began to develop the campus setting; hiring architects to create a massive campus sustainably sourced from local bamboo and stone. The school would, ideally, run “off the grid” by use of hydroelectric and solar power; every component would adhere to or excel standard green building standards. The physical infrastructure of the learning environment would supplement student learning about sustainability – and provide opportunities for learning-project expansion (in the form of bridges, aquaponic farms, biodiesel stations, and more) in years to come. Green School describes the surrounding environment:

Our campus is immersed in the jungle, providing constant opportunities to experience the impact that we have on our environment. To build an appreciation of sustainability, our students start small by thinking locally, they reacquaint themselves with the environment and rebuild their symbiotic relationship with it. Day-by-day, our community develops a strong bond with nature. By making it part of who we are, we

feel inclined to nourish it, compelled to respect it and empowered to care for it now and forever. (Green School, 2016)

Beyond the physical infrastructure of the campus, Green School aims to honor the local by incorporating Balinese culture and curriculum into their programming, as well as emphasizing the natural context of learning.

Since the school's founding in 2008, its stunning images and idyllic mission to foster an interconnected sense of "global citizenship" through principles of sustainability have propelled Green School into international recognition. Founders and students alike at Green School have contributed to TED Talks; architecture students from around the world have published dissertations on the school's expansive bamboo campus; international educators and administrators have flocked to Green School's "Green Educator Courses" offered annually on site; and high-profile guests (such as Dr. Philip Zimbardo, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, biologist Jane Goodall, businessman Richard Branson, actor Adrian Grenier, and pop musician Michael Franti) have visited and applauded the institution. In addition to prominent visitors, Green School provides daily guided public tours of the campus to international tourists. Due to these tours, Green School is visited annually by over 10,000 visitors (Green School, 2017). With a significant media presence (via their online newsletter "Bamboo News", school website, international TV news segments, TED talks, New York Times and other visiting journalists, green educator courses), endorsements from visiting high-profile global leaders and activists, as well as thousands of visitors a year, Green School receives mass international attention for having some of the most innovative ways to develop a school-wide sustainability-oriented program. For this reason, Green School and its students win awards on a yearly basis. Propelling them into international acclaim was their designation as the inaugural winner of "The Greenest School on Earth" by the U.S. Green Building Council four years after the school's inception. Green School in Bali, Indonesia was acknowledged as the best K-12 example of how "sustainability can be integrally woven into the infrastructure, culture and curriculum of a school" (USGBC, 2012).

Campus. South centrally located on the island of Bali, the school is physically situated in the banjar (neighbourhood) of Sibang Kaja in the kecamatan (district) of Abiensamal in the kabupaten (regency) of Badung. A maze-like twenty-minute drive from Ubud (the city known as "the heart of Bali") and you find yourself on a dirt road approaching a modern-day mythical institution – paving its own way in educational endeavors.

The visual appeal of the campus, promoted through flashing images online, is stunning. Sourced from local bamboo, each and every structure dotted among soaring palms and thick banana trees arcs into rounded designs, open to the air, covered in thatched roofing. Students are exposed to the cool moisture from shifting monsoons; the breezes during the dry season; the creatures that crawl and fly into these shared spaces; the creaks and cracks of the bamboo slats under bare feet. The jagged stone paths underfoot are sourced from the body of the volcanic island itself, winding through dewy foliage surrounding the school's campus, down to the Ayung River that divides the school from the neighboring village. The school's open-concept "no-wall" bamboo campus is supported by a hydroelectric water vortex, solar panel garden, compostable toilets, on-site water filtration system, aquaponic greenhouse, and multi-acre organic permaculture farm. Cows roam freely on the periphery of the campus; chickens and roosters wander on shared tracks. School lunch is prepared by a team of local Indonesian chefs, food is sourced from the on-campus or surrounding local farms, and served in straw baskets with banana leaf liners to be composted after each meal. Nearly everything brought into, made in, or residing upon campus is intentional; the school aims to fit into the surrounding natural environment, and utilize the surrounding natural environment as a teacher in and of itself.



Figure 1.6 Kindergarten classroom (top left)

Figure 1.7 A garden area (top right)

Figure 1.8 Green School's recreational field and roofed gymnasium (bottom)

Population. Green School attracts families from all over the world. Unlike other areas of east Asia where expatriate families tend to send their children to international schools out of locality convenience (or prejudice), families seek out Green School and will deliberately move across the world in order to send their children there. Similar to Bali being a vacation destination, Green School is, in this sense, termed a “destination” school. English is the predominant language spoken within the institution, although emphasis is placed on learning Bahasa (Indonesia’s national language) throughout each level of schooling.

According to International School Consultancy (ISC), the number of international schools worldwide in 2015 has trebled since 2000, whereas the number of students rose by 400% in the same time period. Additionally, Asia is the leading continent regarding the number of international schools... [having more] international schools than all other continents combined. (International School Consultancy, 2015 in Vermaak, 2015, p. 11)

Green School has grown from 80 students to nearly 400 enrolled during the 2016-2017 school year Housing families from over 33 nations worldwide (Green School, 2017, p. 14), a large majority of these students come from countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United States. Although the school was founded on the premise of enrolling at least 30% of local Indonesian children within the student body, and while the school currently provides a ‘scholarship program’ for local youth, the current reality remains at about 10% schoolwide. In 2018, individual admission fees were approximately \$3,700 USD, and annual tuition rates as much as \$9,862 for pre-kindergarten and \$18,355 for high school students (Green School, 2018c); rates that are prohibitive for local families earning an income in Indonesian Rupiah (IDR). Instead of being the byproduct of Indonesian students being enrolled in the school, most of the local community engagement is driven by the school’s outreach program: Kul Kul Connection. Kul Kul Connection acts as the branch of the school that provides the surrounding communities with resources the communities themselves have identified and desired; namely, English language classes for elementary, middle, and high school students:

The Kul Kul Connection program builds relationships between the School, local families and the residents of surrounding villages. This multifaceted program is driven by the needs and views of the participants themselves. Starting with a small group of neighbourhood children in 2012, the program has grown with a momentum that exceeded all expectations. The program currently supports 330 local

children to learn for sustainability...Over the past year the program has expanded to include performing arts, village and island-wide sustainability projects, sports and environmental activism. The children successfully worked together to manage the responsible disposal of over 3 tons of trash from their villages. Trash that would have otherwise ended up in rivers, burn piles and the ocean. They are influencing other young people, their families and communities to reduce, sort and responsibly dispose of household trash. (Green School, 2017, p. 8)

Not only does Green School attract families from all over the world, and supports learners in the surrounding neighbourhood, it also attracts and hires international educators. Idealists, yoga teachers, multiple-degree holders, novice and seasoned educators from Indonesia, USA, Canada, Australia, The Netherlands, Brazil, Uruguay, Finland, Taiwan, France, Romania, South Africa, Philippines, and the United Kingdom (Green School, 2017b) undergo a rigorous vetting process and multi-tiered interview sessions to teach at Green School Bali. Along with the international faculty, local Balinese and Indonesian teachers are hired as part of a two-person teaching team in the classroom. Although their roles are implemented side by side, international teachers cover the core curriculum subjects and the local teachers are in charge of teaching Bahasa (language) and Budaya (culture) Indonesia. Many faculty, Balinese and international alike, have made the choice to relocate specifically to teach at Green School; some for the access to nature; some for the allure of the sustainability-minded and practicing community; some because they are from or live near the banjar (neighbourhood) of Sibang Kaja where the school resides; some to continue work in the field of environmentalism; some for the small teacher to student ratios; some to send their own children free of tuition to the school. Most of these educators are drawn by the overall allure of taking part in an idealized dream of sustainability education in action in a remarkably beautiful location; they, like most who come to the school, want to practice and reconceptualize education in a unique setting.

Green School Framework. When designing the foundation for the school's programming and operation, John Hardy hired Australian education consultant Alan Wagstaff as the school's "learning manager and concept designer" to create a framework around his "Three Springs Theory." Similar to the pillars of sustainability (economic, social, environmental), the three components of the "Three Springs Theory" identify the interrelated relationship between educational, social, and commercial enterprises. This theory emphasizes the importance of an integrated learning community where school itself is at the physical and metaphorical heart of the community, while commercial, cultural, and residential activities all support the growth of the school. The Green School itself is divided into four age-grouped "Learning Neighbourhoods": The Early Years Program (Pre-K and

Kindergarten with children ages 3-6), Primary School (Grade 1-5), Middle School (Grade 6-9) and Highschool (Grades 10-12). The physical development of both the school's organizational structures, physical campus and surrounding community has supported this framework. Since 2008,

Green School has grown into a large community due to its commercial, cultural and residential activities. A variety of organisations that surround the Green School campus are Bamboo Village (Housing boarding students, interns, volunteers and language education centre), Kul-Kul Farm (garden management of Green School area), Ibuku (Bamboo Architect Buro), PT Bamboo (Bamboo factory), Kembali (Recycling centre), Kul Kul Connection (Local Community oriented organisation), Green Camp (Eco outdoor camp for schools and families), Green Village (Luxurious, high-end housing facilities)... as well as providing a space for the Begawan Foundation (a non-profit bird conservation center). (Vermaak, 2015, p.8)

Each of the above organizations or businesses are not only in close physical proximity to the school, they also each interact with and support the school directly in some capacity or another. For example, Kembali provides a hub for Green School families and greater community members to sort recycling and donate to/purchase from a used goods store. Students from the surrounding neighbourhood who participate in Green School's after-school English and sustainability education courses (through Kul Kul Connection) pay their 'tuition' by collecting and recycling trash found in their neighbourhoods. During the 2017/2018 school year, 271 students collected over two tonnes of trash to be recycled at Green School (Green School, 2018). Kembali also supplies materials for creative classroom projects (such as bottle caps for an art project in early years, a wall-sized rag rug in elementary years, or 'sustainable' clothes design with non-recyclable foil packages for upper years students).

The school itself hosts dozens of Green School student, family, and faculty-led social enterprises that are integrated into their curriculum. A predominant example includes the BioBus initiative where students collect used palm oil from local restaurants and turn it into biodiesel to run the school bus at a pump on campus. It is the country of Indonesia's first 100% Biodiesel pump and it is available to the public, thus saving 3 tons of CO² emissions per month (Green School, 2017, p. 14). Byproducts of the conversion of cooking oil into biodiesel are then made into soap and candle products that are sold at on-campus markets, and throughout select retail locations on the island.

Each social enterprise, community organization or initiative, or facility on campus reflects values laid out in the "Three Springs" Framework; demonstrating "that a school can be a fulfilling, self-regulating organisation linked to, and inspired by, authentic enterprise. It will be a place of

renewal that will inherently have meaning and purpose, providing children and young people with a stimulating, entrepreneurial, and sustainable environment in which to develop and learn by example” (Wagstaff, n.d., p.1).

Pedagogy & Curriculum. The Green School prides itself on paving the way in sustainability education by “cherry picking” their own amalgamation of pedagogical beliefs and curricular practices (Medima, personal interview, 2017). Wagstaff’s “Educational Vision” promotes the idea that schooling builds intelligence through relevant, experiential learning opportunities. Green School’s pedagogical approach to learning, therefore, can be summarized through this quote:

What makes people smart, curious, alert, observant, competent, confident, resourceful, persistent - in the broadest and best sense, intelligent- is not having access to more and more learning places, resources, and specialists, but being able in their lives to do a wide variety of interesting things that matter, things that challenge their ingenuity, skill, and judgement, and that make an obvious difference in their lives and the lives of people around them. (Holt, 1981 in Wagstaff, n.d., p. 3)

Although Wagstaff utilizes this idea from education reformist John Holt (whose publication this quote comes from targets homeschooling), the overarching idea that children need opportunities to do “things that matter” has been shaped to meet Green School’s curricular agenda. Green School uses the campus’ immediate community resources (i.e. Kembali, BioBus) to facilitate relevant learning experiences with their students. The school also incorporates itself in the Balinese society and with the local banjar (neighbourhood) of Sibang Kaja. Environmental issues facing the island or neighbourhood are often taken up through school-wide initiatives out in the wider community; for example, Green School spearheads an annual island-wide beach cleanup that collects tons of trash from Bali’s shorelines each year. Green School also follows the Balinese calendar and participates in community celebrations such as Nyepi (Balinese New Year), and holidays such as Saraswati (Day of Knowledge).

To uphold a learning philosophy based around providing relevant learning experiences to their learners, Green School follows a “Three Frame Day.” Throughout each Learning Neighbourhood, days are divided into three sub-categories of experiential curricular activity: Thematic, Proficiency, and Experiential. Within the Early Years Program Curriculum Overview (2018), the “Thematic Frame” units “inspire students through relevant concepts and real-world experiences...used for developing high engagement / love of learning and initial concept building” (p. 4). The “Proficiency Frame” units are “dedicated to learning specific core skills, which form the basis of literacy, numeracy and language other than English (Bahasa Indonesia)” (p. 4). The

Experiential Frame “is the ‘hands-on getting dirty’ part of Green School. Whether it means working in the school gardens, creating art, building out of bamboo, learning first aid, or carrying out work experience, you will find students exploring and problem solving around the campus and around Bali. Students in every Learning Neighbourhood engage in real-world practical projects that deepen their understanding of their physical place in the world” (p. 5).

The Early Years Neighbourhood (also referred to as the Early Years Program) follows the same framework as the primary, middle, and high school Learning Neighbourhoods, albeit with “developmentally appropriate” (Green School Prospectus, 2018) practices. Although it is not explicit in their curriculum documents how the Green School skills and values are introduced or how proficiencies are outlined, the Early Years Program centralizes play as the main form of learning. At large, the program aims to

...spark children’s natural curiosity and instills the joy of learning through singing, dancing, art, story-telling, cultural celebrations, yoga and mindfulness, green studies, and excursions around our awe-inspiring campus. This is interspersed with a gentle integration of proficiencies such as numbers and letters in a very holistic, play-based way. There is a large emphasis in our Early Years program on instilling values of kindness, love and mutual respect for each other and our planet. The program for all classes, Geckos [3 years], Starlings [4 years] and Kindy [5 years], is built around six areas of learning:

1. Physical Development (Gross Motor and Fine Motor)
2. Social Emotional
3. Language Development
4. Cognitive
5. Creative Expression
6. Bahasa Indonesia

(Green School, 2017c)

Albeit broad, Green School’s overarching pedagogical and curricular framework through every Learning Neighbourhood (including the “Three Springs Theory”, the organization of “Three Framed Day”) encompasses an integrated, whole-school and whole-community approach to learning. It is with this platform, Green School believes, that students will ideally learn to become “A Community of Learners Making *Our* World Sustainable” (Green School, 2018, p. 3).

Summary. Green School is an institution that promotes sustainability throughout its infrastructure (bamboo campus), setting (natural jungle in Bali) and curriculum (skills, values and

beliefs promoted through the programming). It is also an institution that hosts a diverse community of local Balinese and international students and families striving to live and learn about “sustainability in action” through its unique educational model. The cultural and storied landscape of the island of Bali provides the context in which Green School is situated. In the following chapter, I will provide rationale for how my research was conducted; discussing my theoretical framework and how my chosen methodologies and methods contributed to creating a narrative that examines these many components of Green School.



Research Design

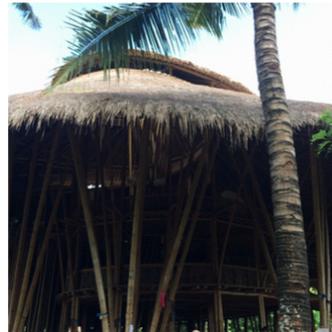


Figure 2.1 Sky (top left)

Figure 2.2 Bleached Coral (bottom left)

Figure 2.3 Heart of School (bottom right)

Theoretical Framework

“Theory attempts to explain why things work the way that they do, and that it usually does so by way of identifying and examining relationships among things” (Maxwell, 2005; Strauss, 1995 in Ravitch & Riggan, 2012, p. 16). The following section explicates the relationship between my theoretical framework, methodological approaches, and methods. I begin by providing an overview of social constructionism and its role in the design of my study. Imbedded in my constructionist framework is a critical theory-inspired examination of how power and privilege might affect the social construction of knowledge. Second, I illustrate how and why three particular methodological approaches – namely case study, ethnography, and grounded theory – comprised the methodological makeup of my inquiry. Finally, I offer an overview of how these methodologies informed the research methods in the study itself.

Social Constructionism

My study was approached, conducted, and analyzed through a social constructionist theoretical framework. Constructionism focuses on how we make meaning of reality (socially or individually). Social constructionism emphasizes the social processes (such as institutions and schools) that shape that reality – and acknowledges that realities themselves are multiple, contingent, value laden, and overall subjective compositions shaped by our social processes (Crotty, 1998; Burr, 2016). In the effort to understand how programs shape young learners’ relationships to their environments, a social constructionist lens takes into account the multiplicity of factors that influence the building of these relationships. This theory also supports the idea that “the social world and the natural world are not to be seen...as distinct worlds existing side by side” (Crotty, 1998, p. 57); rather, our interpretations and interactions with/within our environments are inextricably enmeshed with socially constructed meaning. On account of this social constructionist foundation, I designed this study and analyzed my findings with the epistemological assumption that knowledge(s) about Green School in Bali are co-constructed through multi-faceted interactions between me (as the researcher), the host community, and my participants.

Building on this polyvocal foundation, social constructionism “tends to foster a critical spirit” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58) and provides a foundation to challenge the notion of “objective” realities shaped by dominant discourses; the theory inherently interrogates the construction of meaning and examines societal factors (such as power and privilege) that influence that meaning. (This has led to the rise of critical theory which “emphasises that particular sets of meanings exist to serve

hegemonic interests” (Crotty, 1998, p. 60) and is an area of inquiry that emerged during research which I will touch on in the findings sections of this thesis.) Understanding reality through a constructionist lens creates a position for subjugated groups to participate in discourses where they might otherwise be excluded. For example, approaching research from a constructionist theoretical framework helps to illuminate and problematize some of the inherent power hierarchies or levels of control (Wolf, 1996) between groups of people (children and adults) in the international and local community of Green School’s Early Years Program. Constructionism values the realities of all research participants, and how these realities create meaning. Children in early childhood education research, in particular, have often been subjugated through deficit views regarding age, physical and material dependence, cognitive development, and so on. Constructionism’s core recognition that “each person’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58) promotes understanding children’s meaning-making that expands the outmoded view of children as constrained by their brain development and cognition, instead “turning cognitive development into more of a project shared with others, and less of one marked by distancing from the social, emotional, or physical” (Seifert, 2004, para 3). In general, constructionism aligns with the progressing view of children as active participants in meaning-making in their educational contexts (Percy-Smith & Burns, 2013).

Furthermore, constructionism also speaks to the reality that the data I collect and interpret is through a lens that has been shaped by my own contextual and social experiences in life which have shaped my positionality as a researcher. The constructionist recognition that researchers “are caught in their culture much as the people they study” (Nader, 2011, p. 216) was a meaningful touchstone for reflexivity which allowed me to be better understand and analyze issues (such as distance, identity, etc.) that arose during fieldwork.

Given my interest in holding space for expertise and knowledges of multiple participants including young children and their teachers, a constructionist framework guided my research design to include a blended methodological approach. My blended methodological approach is one which acknowledges and promotes the idea that there is no absolute truth; the belief that we interpret the world through experiences, and everyone's experiences are equally “true” and “real” aligns with the contextual basis of case study, the cultural nature of my methods, and the emergent nature of research itself.

Methodological Approaches: Case Study, Ethnography & Grounded Theory

In research, utilizing a single “Methodology” requires a specific philosophical or ontological outlook underpinning. I use the term “approach” intentionally as my research project was best suited to draw from three complementary qualitative methodologies; case study, ethnography, and grounded theory. Each of these approaches have roots in my guiding theoretical framework of constructionism and move away from producing positivist interpretations of reality. Additionally, these approaches overlap in their emphasis on group-oriented and narrative research, units of analysis (the Early Years Program), inductive multi-modal data collection and analysis methods, and thoughtful engagement with research participants. Below I will discuss each approach and clarify which attributes of the methodology from which I drew to inform my research.

Case Study

I am primarily using a “case study approach” to guide my research. “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information...and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

My research design follows these categorical delineations:

- I studied a phenomenon: The Early Years Program
- The phenomenon occurred in a specific context: Green School in Bali, Indonesia
- The phenomenon and context are bound in space: The Early Years Program “Learning Neighbourhood” within Green School’s campus
- The phenomenon is bound in time: One semester during the 2016-2017 school year with a specific set of students and faculty who signed consent forms.

I have categorized my case study as a “nested case study” (Patton, 2002) defined as “single case within its context” (Crabbé & Leroy, 2008, p. 59). Nested case studies generally are delineated by one unit of analysis (such as the Early Years Program) but take into account surrounding contextual factors that influence the data collection and construction of the case during fieldwork. For example, Patton (2002) notes “extended fieldwork can and typically does involve many mini- or micro-case studies of various units of analysis (individuals, groups, specific activities, specific periods of time, critical incidents), all of which together make up the overall case study” (p. 298). Therefore,

constructing this case was a process that involved taking into account information from various groups, activities, and insights that arose during fieldwork within the case. Utilizing a nested case-study approach allowed me to highlight some of these specific instances during analysis of my data, as well as allowed me to examine some of the complexities within the case during data representation (detailed in Chapter 3). This case study approach suits my research objectives of studying a specific program while contextualizing it within its various realities.

Ethnography

One way ethnography is understood is as process of describing and interpreting “the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group” (Harris, 1968). My research approach was ethnographically-oriented due to the focus of studying the culture of the people of the phenomena (teachers, students, administrators) and the broader social context and culture in which the research was situated. Creswell (2007) delineates case study from ethnography as such: “The entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case, but the intent in ethnography is to determine how the culture works rather than to understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration” (p. 73). However, I argue that ethnography’s focus on understanding how culture functions within the case helps to clarify the social context of the case itself – a main area of inquiry during my fieldwork. Ethnography acknowledges that groups “are interconnected, not fragmented; they are whole systems, and therefore any description of them, to be complete, must tackle the whole” (Nader, 2011, p. 211).

The Early Years Program as a whole was a unique example of a community. While physically bound by the school’s campus and organizationally bound by being a specific group or “Learning Neighbourhood” within the school, the program contained a diverse multi-national and multi-cultural community of learners and educators. The student body was made up of multiple nationalities, multiple cultures, and varying economic backgrounds. Describing and interpreting interactions between a collective group of individuals with varying international and cultural backgrounds provided a rich foundation from which to contextualize my research and allowed me to take into consideration the broader context of the learning environment beyond the boundaries of the case itself.

My ethnographically-oriented research design also included extended observations of the Early Years Program “in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people” (Creswell, 2007, p. 69). Immersion into a new culture or group not only informed my data collection

and analysis methods; recognition of immersion in the day-to-day lives validates that the information gathering process was an ongoing, lived experience – one in which I was constructing and reevaluating on a daily basis in tandem with the research participants. This ongoing process of creating meaning within a group, as well as recognizing my own subjective positionality and participation in fieldwork, speaks to a constructionist framework.

My academic background in Cultural Anthropology and International Studies strengthened my ethnographic approach in this methodology.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory has been known as a “systematic method consisting of several flexible strategies for constructing theory through analyzing qualitative data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory focuses on “developing a theory grounded in data from the field” and is useful “when theory is not available to explain a process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 78). Because of the lack of research in the area of ECEfS in international settings, a vital part of my research process was to construct a narrative that helped to advance knowledge about how children develop relationships with their surrounding environments based on the case in which I was studying. My research was guided by shifting questions that allowed me to construct insights as they emerged during fieldwork and data analysis.

While constructionism (which implies meaning is constructed relationally through social interactions and dialogue) is more aligned with my theoretical framework by focusing on social contexts, constructivism (which implies meaning is made within the individual) also applies to my research approach; both are post-structural understandings that view knowledge as constructed, fluid, and contextual rather than objective and awaiting discovery. In this way, I adopt a constructivist approach to Grounded Theory as outlined by Charmaz (2006; 2017) which advocates “for a social constructivist perspective that includes emphasizing diverse local worlds, multiple realities, and the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions” (Creswell, 2007, p. 65). Charmaz (2017)

adopts earlier grounded theory strategies but differs from its predecessors by...acknowledging your and your research participants, multiple standpoints, roles, and realities, adopting a reflexive stance toward your background, values, actions, situations, relationships with research participants, and representations of them, and situating your research in the historical, social, and situational conditions of its production. Constructivist grounded theory attends to researchers and research participants’ language, meanings, and actions. (Charmaz, 2017, p. 299)

Constructivist grounded theory allows researchers to move beyond “positivist underpinnings” of systematic meaning construction and instead offers an approach that values and allows for flexibility during data gathering and analysis in order to construct more complete, contextualized, constructed insights into the research. A central example of this flexibility is to allow research questions to change during the research process. Agee (2009) notes “Good qualitative questions are usually developed or refined in all stages of a reflexive and interactive inquiry journey” (p. 432) which overall allows the researcher “to reflect an increased understanding of the problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 43) during fieldwork and in data analysis. Approaching fieldwork with this flexibility highlights the “researcher’s capacities to examine their own roles and perspectives in the inquiry process, especially how they are positioned in relation to participants” (Agee, 2009, p. 432). Constructivist grounded theory, according to Charmaz, complements the holistic, ongoing narrative building of both case study and ethnography.

Summary

Constructionism, as I have explained above, forms the epistemological foundation of this study. Intentionally drawing on three methodological approaches supports my endeavor to examine how the Early Years Program enacts and conceptualizes connections to the environment. Alongside that inquiry, my chosen blended-methodology also allows me to take into consideration how this knowledge is constructed within the social contexts of the case itself. Case study, ethnography, and grounded theory approaches informed my selection of methods (participant observation, interviews) and data analysis (thematic analysis and writing as inquiry), which will be discussed next.

Methods

Outline

This section provides a structural outline of my research design. Here I delineate the research timeline; provide insight to the physical setting where the study took place; as well as offer a general overview of the research participants. In addition to providing reasoning for my chosen research methods (participant observation and interviews), this section also details the procedures that I followed before, during and after fieldwork. I address considerations regarding research access, managing roles during fieldwork, and research dissemination with the school community.

Due to the fact that this research project underwent an extensive logistical process in order to come to fruition, as well as entailed a considerable amount of time in the field compared to other MA projects, I assert that a more detailed acknowledgment of these research factors should be taken into account.

From the end of January 2017 to June 2017, I undertook a six-month internship position at Green School in Bali, Indonesia. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork with the school's preschool program ("Early Years Program"/EYP) with children aged three to six. Within the Early Years Program, I conducted a qualitative case study to understand if or how the sustainability-oriented school setting, culture or curriculum shape young "children's connection to nature" in the unique geographic and cultural location of Bali. My research was guided by three complimentary qualitative methodological approaches (case study, ethnography and grounded theory) which acted to build the case. The methods I employed were participant observation with teachers and students, as well as interviews with teachers and administrators. The data I generated included daily written descriptive field notes, recorded conversations/interviews, photographs, artifacts/creations (i.e. art or contributions to my field notebook) from preschoolers, and physical document analysis (i.e. curriculum outlines, school policies and mission statements). The combination of these qualitative methods compliments a constructionist theoretical lens, as well as have been used in similar research projects with young learners (Caiman & Lundegard, 2013; Mackey, 2012; Miller 2017).

Setting

Daily participant observation took place within the Early Years Program "neighbourhood" classrooms and learning environment; this encompassed a physical area housing three open-walled bamboo classrooms, and a multi-purpose classroom used for art, music, and Bahasa (language) and Budaya (culture) specific programming. The EYP Neighbourhood also had two connected outdoor areas for playing and eating. The built environment in the outdoor play areas included monkey bars, a swing set, tire swings, a large bamboo pirate ship, metal slide built into the hillside, tire swings, a tire structure built up into a small hill, a stone-basin drinking fountain, and a shallow stone tub dug into the earth that was used for water recreation. The open-structured eating areas included short bamboo tables with long benches under thatched roofing. The natural environment of the outdoor play areas included towering palm and banana trees and foliage, bamboo shoots, dirt, mud, and stone pathways, as well as a fish and frog pond.

The EYP also utilized the surrounding campus as part of their learning setting; weekly Jalan Jalan (“nature walks”) around the other Learning Neighbourhoods nestled within the campus, trips to the open-wall ‘gym’ and grassy fields, school-wide assemblies each Friday in the Mepantran or “Sengkep” (assembly hall), visits to the Heart of School, classes in the upcycled teak yoga pavilion, and treks to the edges of campus (i.e. the bridge over the Ayung river that connected Green School to the village of Sibang Kaja, or bird tours at the Begawan Foundation).



Figure 2.4 Panoramic photo of an area of the Early Years Program Learning Neighbourhood

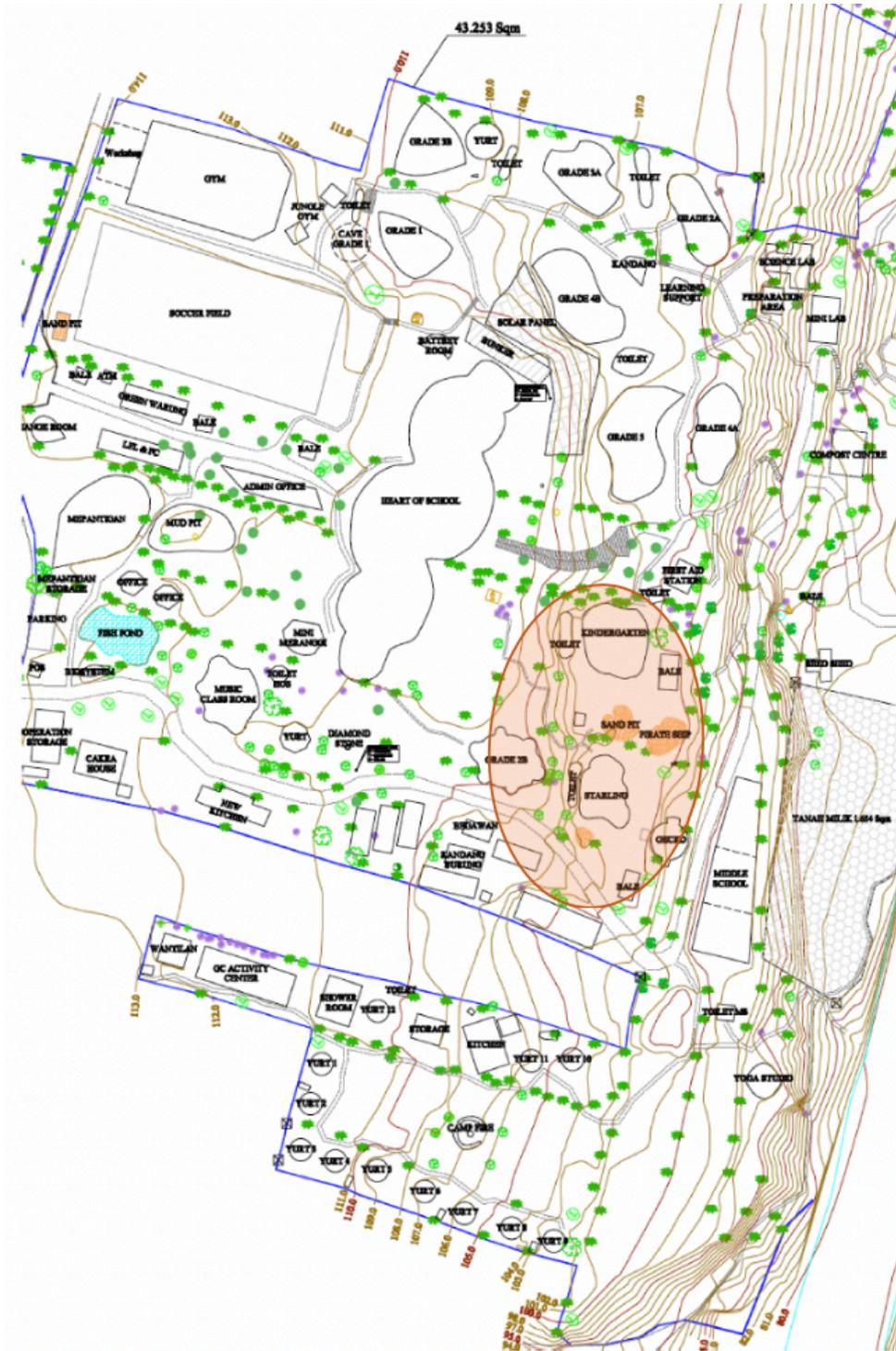


Figure 2.5 Green School campus topography

(Vermaak, 2015, p. 41)

Orange area [added] delineates the location of the Early Years Program Neighbourhood within the greater campus area.

Participants

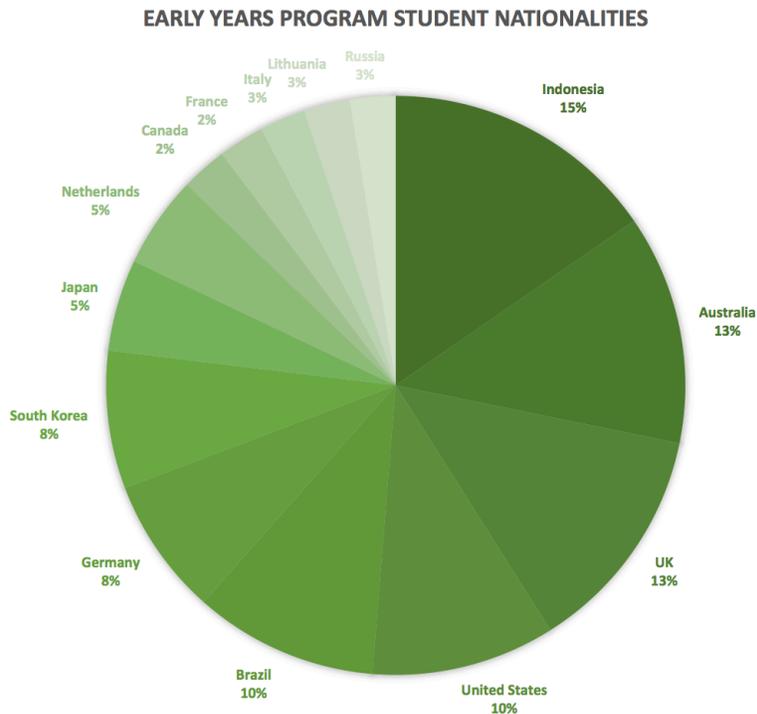
The following section represents the research participants who signed consent forms and are those with whom I spent each day with during participant observations in the classrooms. (Consent procedures are discussed in the following pages.)

Child Participants: The inclusion criteria for the study’s student population was children ages 3-6 enrolled full or part time in the Early Years Program at Green School between January 2017 to June 2018. This included children in each age-differentiated classroom within the Early Years Program:

Table 2.1 Student Participants

Class Name	Age Range (Years Old)	Number of Students (With Consent)	Dates Spent in Classroom
Geckos	3-4	12	January 30 – April 14
Starlings	4-5	17	April 17 – May 19
Kindy	5-6	10	May 19 – June 15

Table 2.2 Student Nationalities



The total number of collective child research participants was 39 individuals. There were approximately 3 students in the Starlings classroom and 10 in the Kindy class who did not participate in the research process; either due to their absence during fieldwork, their parents not signing consent forms, or due to the students' initial verbal decline to participate. While avoiding inclusion of these students during group observations or interactions was challenging at times, I did not take notes of their declarative statements or conversations with other students, nor did I take pictures of the children who declined to participate.

The international student body in the Early Years Program that took part in the research process was comprised of 14 nationalities. Each family and their children had been in Bali (or were planning on staying in Bali) for different amounts of time: some for one semester, some indefinitely. Some of the Early Years students' parents relocated to Bali from other areas of the world and chose to birth and raise their children on the island. Six students were children of local Balinese faculty or staff members at Green School who had waived tuition fees (as is the case with all faculty students). As discussed in the previous "Overview of Green School Bali: Population" section, the parent and student population chose to relocate from countries predominantly (although not exclusively) from the Global North to learn at Green School. The majority of these families were of middle or high SES with foreign incomes that could afford the school's private international school tuition fees. Some relocated so their children could experience access to nature; some came for the allure of the sustainability-minded and practicing community. Like most of the community members at Green School, parents I spoke to were drawn to the overall allure of taking part in an idealized dream of sustainability education in action in a remarkably beautiful location.

Although I spent time researching each of the three classrooms in the EYP, for the purpose of brevity and clarity in this thesis I will focus my findings with children from the Geckos classroom with children ages 3-4 years old. I chose to focus on this group for this publication due to the following factors: I spent the greatest number of weeks in this first classroom and was able to observe and interact with children and teachers over the entire six-month period (compared to Kindergarten where I only began formally interacting with children/teachers during the last few weeks). The Geckos class set the scene for my introduction to and evolving understanding of the Early Years Program at large. Nyepi, a significant Balinese holiday, also took place during my time with the Geckos. This event, the time in the classroom leading up to it, and the observations and reflections after, significantly informed the construct and theme of "culture" into the research project. Overall, this group provided the most complete insights into my developing research

questions. Finally, much of the research in ECEfS has taken place with older children (i.e. kindergarten through grade three) and not young preschoolers. Practitioners and researchers alike often hold to “developmental-deficit” views of children (Davis & Elliott, 2014), believing they are cognitively and socially inferior to their older peers. Mackey explains this reality is often a barrier to valuing young children’s voices and contributions to research (Mackey, 2012). Choosing to focus on research with the youngest group of children within this program helps to fill a gap in the developing body of ECEfS research.

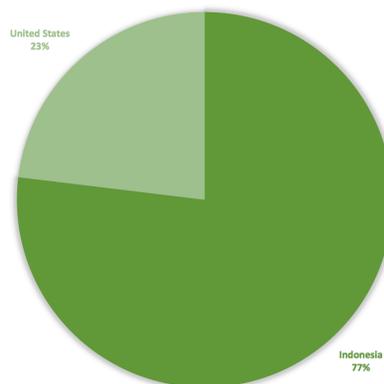
Faculty/Staff/Administration Participants: The inclusion criteria for the study’s teacher population was full or part time positions held in either staff (i.e. assistant aid teachers hired by Green School’s operations team), faculty (i.e. lead or assistant teachers), or administration (i.e. Head of the Early Years Program and Head of School) positions in the Early Years Program at Green School between January 2017 to June 2018. This included positions in each age-differentiated classroom within the Early Years Program:

Table 2.3 Faculty/Staff/Administration Participants

Class Name	Number of Faculty, Staff, Administrators (With Consent)
Geckos	2
Starlings	4
Kindy	3
Specialist Teachers	2
Administrators	2

Table 2.4 Faculty/Staff/Administration Participants Nationalities

EARLY YEARS PROGRAM TEACHER, STAFF & ADMINISTRATION NATIONALITIES



The total number of research participants in this group was 13 individuals. The professional body of the Early Years Program was predominantly comprised of self-identifying female Indonesian or Balinese staff, teacher, and administrators during the 2016-2017 school year, including the Head Administrator of the Early Years Program. The three exceptions were the lead teacher in the Starlings class (female), the “Green Studies” specialist teacher (male), and the Head of School (female) who were all from the United States. As is common within the professional faculty body at Green School, individuals held these positions for varying amounts of years, and had varying amounts of formal educational training within their positions. Exclusion criteria for the participants were faculty, staff and administrators who have not been employed at Green School since the beginning of the school year (August 2016).

Procedures

Research Access. Green School is heavily publicized and well-known internationally; so much so that the school has an entire team of employees dedicated to managing outreach, marketing, and communications of the world’s interest in their educational institution. However, interest in the school exceeds their capacity to address all inquiries, despite my efforts to contact individuals and gauge interest in my research project before applying through formal channels. In order to spend an extended time at Green School (beyond becoming an employee, a visitor through a day tour, or a participant in a week-long “Green Educator Course” on campus), I applied for an internship position which would allow me access to the school for a period of one semester through the school’s multi-tiered online application process. According to Green School’s Teacher Development and Well-Being Manager, Ibu Sanne VanOort (my Green School supervisor while conducting fieldwork), over a thousand applications are submitted for only a handful of intern positions each year. After a lengthy process which included evaluation of written personal and professional credentials and assessment of potential of contribution to the Green School community, three separate Skype interviews with Ibu Sanne VanOort and Ibu Suci Ratri (head of the Early Years Program), and multiple months of e-mail correspondence and logistical organization, I solidified an internship position within the school extending from January 2017 to June 2017. Due to Indonesia’s fluctuating government restrictions on allowing foreign internship positions within the country, I was fortunate to be the only international student joining a team of twelve Indonesian interns. For the duration of my internship and research position, I lived in a

simple shared house with three other female interns; residing in the dense jungle only a few minutes' walk to the school on the periphery of campus near a field of kasava plants, a small temple, and Green School's Kul Kul Farm.

I was granted access to the Early Years Program faculty and students on a weekly basis for the period of one semester. Beyond the school day, I also:

- Attended twice monthly neighbourhood meetings with the Early Years Program faculty and staff.
- Attended school-wide professional development events and faculty meetings.
- Participated in and completed Green School's "Green Educator Course" in March 2017.
- Developed and conducted a professional development presentation on the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood learning. Here, 12 members of the Early Years faculty and staff received a brief review of the history, theory, philosophy and practice of the approach. After, the faculty and staff participated in an activity that explored where the "Green School Approach" was similar, different, and overlapping with the Reggio Emilia approach. Through a participative exercise in small groups, members brainstormed how they might adapt some aspects of Reggio to the current setting and curriculum within their classrooms in the Early Years Program.
- Sat in on meetings with Sanne Van Oort and other faculty/staff members working to develop the first all-Indonesian and Balinese Green Educator Course.
- Attended school-wide celebrations (i.e. Nyepi), events (i.e. biweekly farmer's markets and Sustainable Solutions fair) as well as weekly and special assemblies.
- Participated in a weekend-long trip with Kul Kul Connection to Menjangan Island in NW Bali where students discussed the strengths and challenges of the Menjangan community's grassroots mangrove preserve with local leaders in northwestern Bali.

I am grateful to have been invited to spend a full semester interning within and researching Green School. Beyond focusing on the Early Years Program, I was fortunate enough to meet and interact with a vast number of different individuals within the school community (i.e. administrators, staff, teachers, students, parents, interns, and Kul Kul students) as well as greater island community (community activists, filmmakers, local residents, residents from other islands in Indonesia, and expatriates). This extended amount of time and interactions in Bali created a valuable composite context from which to position my research. Situating the Early Years Program/Green School in the greater "place" of our increasingly integrated international landscape created a more holistic understanding of the unique position that Green School inhabits as a multinational and sustainability-oriented progressive educational model. Being a part of and interacting with many communities, I learned a great deal about localized and global environmental issues, socio-cultural

and political history, the extensive impact of tourism, and current tensions surrounding growth and power relations on the island.

Managing Roles During Research. “Researchers often find themselves utilizing a combination of several roles” (Gansen, 2017, p.85) during fieldwork. I held a variety of roles during my fieldwork which simultaneously informed and complicated my individual research process and data collection. My position at Green School was divided into two objectives: to act as an intern within the Early Years Program, while simultaneously conducting a case study of the program to fulfill my Master’s degree requirements. In this way, I was continually managing my responsibilities between the requirements of groups of individuals and institutions; parents, children, teachers, and administrators at Green School in Indonesia, as well as the requirements of being a graduate student and researcher at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

On a smaller scale in the classrooms, for example, I was simultaneously required to assume adult titles (i.e. “Tbu” before my name) and responsibilities (i.e. assisting in rule regulation and time management) similar to the children’s teachers, yet was also seen as a temporary visiting guest with more involved levels of engagement with students (i.e. taking notes and engaging in play) than that of teachers. On a larger scale, some of these transformable roles with varying responsibilities swung between individual, researcher, intern, guest, westerner, student, teacher, care-taker, playmate, bystander, and contributor. Continually inhabiting these multiple roles required an ongoing process of reflexivity as an individual during my research process. In this sense, continued reflexivity “turns the fieldworker's negotiation of his or her professional role into an object of study, analyzes the power relations involved...” (Robben & Sulka, 2007, p. 9) and helped to contextualize my evolving position during the data collection, analysis, and representation process.

It is also important to note that I approached fieldwork being highly aware of my own individual subjectivity and positionality. Beyond being an intern and a researcher, I was also managing my role as an individual human being and my position within a new community, in a new culture(s), in a new country. I entered my research project having undergone an exhaustive process of organizing the project (which spanned the course of years) and eagerly began fieldwork with an intense curiosity and enchantment surrounding this seemingly exemplary school nestled in the middle of the jungle. While open to critique as a researcher, it is undeniable that I carried with me a great amount of optimism as a practitioner entering fieldwork. Yet the complexities inherent in inhabiting multiple roles and traversing between different groups, along with dedicated reflexivity

during fieldwork, ultimately allowed me to better understand the learning environment as well as reflect these insights during the data gathering and analysis process.

Research Consent. When writing about methods, researchers conducting participant observation with children often minimally discuss how children come to make sense of the researcher's role in the field "although discourse amongst researchers signals to recognizing children as "capable and competent members of the social world" (Gansen, 2017, p. 90). Like other researchers, "I argue that it is important to reflect on children's processes of understanding and meaning making associated with the researcher's roles in the field" (Corsaro, 2015; Prout & James, 2015 in Gansen, 2017, p. 91) to honor their participation during all levels of the research process.

I spent the first few weeks in the Early Years Program becoming familiar with the teachers, students and parents; rooting myself in the classroom as a human being first and foremost. Spending time for the students in the Geckos class (children ages 3-4 years old) to become familiar with another adult body in their small classroom without notebooks or cameras was especially important in building a foundation of awareness and trust. After the first two weeks as consent forms were handed back to me by the parents, I sat with the Geckos students in a circle; explained (again) who I was (a student from North America), where I came from (pointing to Canada, using a globe to trace my journey to Indonesia); what Canada is like (pine trees, snow, black bears...yet sharing the same Pacific ocean as Bali); why I came to the classroom (to learn about what the Geckos were doing, and how they were learning about the earth); and what I was going to do (write a story about all of the things I learned from the Geckos class to share with people in Canada and all over the world). I acquired initial verbal consent by asking if they were ok with me writing down notes and taking photos for the story I was writing. I also expressed to them that if that if they ever wanted to contribute to the "notes" – they could write/draw in my notebook and take photos with my camera. In my own experience, I found that "offering and allowing children to write their names and color in my notebook provided a useful strategy of initial rapport building with children" (Gansen, 2017, p.87) as well as offered insights into their lives beyond declarative and actionable observations.

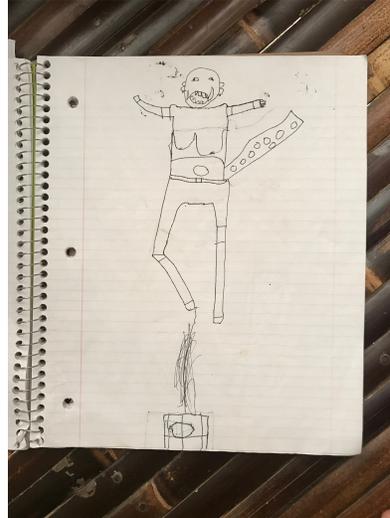
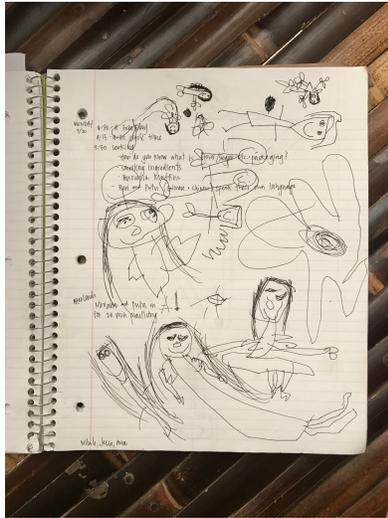


Figure 2.6 Examples of child research participants contributions to fieldnotes 1 (left)
Figure 2.7 Example of child research participants contributions to fieldnotes 2 (right)

I iterated that I would always ask them for permission before taking photos, and that they could always tell me ‘no’ and I/their teachers would not be mad, nor would they be in trouble. In some instances, children would say “no” and I would smile and say “ok, thank you for telling me.” Asking permission to write notes, take pictures and ask questions was repeated frequently with individuals throughout the research process. This process was repeated within each classroom I conducted participant observation with throughout the semester (Geckos, Starlings, Kindy).

In terms of child participation assent, I draw largely on research and guidelines set forth by Early Childhood advocates and academics Sue Dockett and Bob Perry (2011). For my research, I adopt an ongoing assent process, “requiring the researcher to be ‘vigilant to the responses of the child’” as well as acknowledging “the importance of non-verbal, as well as verbal actions as children use a range of means to signal the choices they wish to make...Recognizing children’s ability to provide assent also requires acknowledging their right to dissent and hence to opt out of the research” (Dockett & Perry, 2011, p. 233). As is best practice with research in the early years, I regarded assent as “an explicit, affirmative agreement to participate, not merely the absence of objection” (Dockett & Perry, 2011, p. 233).

Participant Observation. I spent Monday through Thursday in the “classrooms” of Green School’s Early Years program with an international group of children ages three to six years old as a participant observer. “Participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning

the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010, p. 1). Participant observation is a method that speaks to each methodology from which I drew (case study, ethnography, and grounded theory) and “encourages the continual reassessment of initial research questions and hypotheses and facilitates the development of new hypotheses and questions as new insights occur as a result of increasing familiarity with the context” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010, p. 15).

My time during the day was divided between taking moments to sit on the periphery of children’s or teachers’ interactions; taking photos and playing alongside children; engaging in conversations and asking questions with children and teachers. When understanding ourselves in relation to children during participant observation, education researcher Allison Sterling Henward (2017) states: “Approaching children’s perspectives from anthropological traditions suggests we must privilege the child as informant to his or her own culture rather than attempting to describe from the outside” (p. 74). Regarding children as active contributors to projects (at all ages) aligns with current beliefs underlying Early Childhood Educational efforts (UNCRC, 1989), and continues efforts in the realms of academia to “research with, rather than on, children, in a desire to position children as social actors who are subjects, rather than objects of enquiry” (Christensen & James, 2017, p 1). Spending a prolonged period of time during the school year with the Early Years Program provided me with an opportunity to better understand children’s unique culture in their school community; how they communicate amongst their peers and teachers, interact with their surroundings, as well as with what they chose to share with me.

During fieldwork I also needed to interpret aspects of child-culture amongst three and four-year-olds that were not readily offered through direct verbal communication or artifact collection. One way to accomplish this while remaining consistent with valuing child-centered information was through paying close attention to children’s observable action during play. In her work on identity and literacy, Kendrick (2005) promotes the idea of looking at children’s play through a “sideways” lens. Some interpretations of play suggest that play is an imitation of adult life, or an expression of inner thoughts. A “sideways” glance, however, suggests “children are both the *subjects* as well as *objects* of their own play (Erhmann, 1968) because they are required to simultaneously define and communicate who they are in the play event and who they are as real people in the social context” (Kendrick, 2005, p. 7). In this sense, play is its own construction of reality and not a hypothetical effort to acquire the reality of adults. Approaching young children’s imagined identities during play in the context of Green School through a “sideways” lens provided insights into how children position themselves in the world (Kendrick, 2005, p. 5) at the present moment, and further provided

a context for understanding how the Green School's Early Years Program might impact this position.

Children's experiences and voices remained at the core of the project, although my role of researcher and the focus of my study ultimately took a position of constructing a story with multiple pieces and perspectives from many people. Spending a prolonged period of time during the school year with the Early Years Program provided me with an opportunity to not only better understand children's unique culture in their school community (i.e. how they communicate amongst their peers and teachers, interact with their surroundings, as well as with what they chose to share with me through verbal declaration/conversations, observable actions, and artifacts such as artwork, etc.), it also provided me with adult teacher insights into the greater learning environment. Because of the similarity of responsibility within my role alongside the teachers, I also spent a great deal of time interacting and conversing with them on a daily basis, as well as through formal interviews. Interactions with teachers (through daily participant observation and interview processes) informed a significant portion of my contextual perceptions of the program.

Interviews. I conducted a total 5 semi-structured individual and teaching team interviews with teachers and administrators at Green School over the course of fieldwork. Each formal interview occurred after I had been in the different classrooms for an extended period of time and was familiar with the teachers and students. The three interviews with teachers were conducted after the school day was over either in the classrooms of the Early Years Program or the Heart of School. The two interviews with administrators took place during the school day in their offices. Each interview lasted between one to two hours, with the exception of Ibu Leslie Medima which lasted approximately thirty minutes.

- Geckos (Ibu Kadek, Ibu Pipit)
- Starlings (Ibu Russlee, Ibu Ria)
- Kindy (Ibu Kiara, Ibu Yulia)
- Head of Early Years Program (Ibu Suci Ratri)
- Head of School (Ibu Leslie Medima)

Galetta and Cross (2013) describe semi-structured interviews as a method of inquiry that “incorporate[s] both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions, eliciting data grounded in the experience of the participant as well as data guided by existing constructs in the particular discipline within which one is conducting research” (p. 45). In this regard, these five semi-structured interviews acted as a tool to clarify emergent themes within daily participant observation.

However, as a research method, interviews are “being reevaluated in terms of...structure, interactional dynamics, situational responsiveness, and discursive dimensions” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012, p.3). The process of conducting interviews was not simply a process of asking and answering questions; instead, interviews encompassed more intuitive and interactive nuances. While my formalized interviews with the teaching teams and school administrators were guided by a list of questions, questioning and inquiry were part of an evolving “circular process” that took shape in the form of conversations or questions that arose contextually throughout repeated daily interaction. Because I was discussing insights, observations, or questions regarding the children or the learning context with Green School teachers, it was important to allow the interview process to be ongoing and collaborative when discussing meaning regarding a third party (children). Elliot Mishler states:

Rather than serving as a stimulus having a predetermined and presumably shared meaning and intended to elicit a response, a question may more usefully be thought of as part of a circular process through which its meaning and that of its answer are created in the discourse between interviewer and respondent as they try to make continuing sense of what they are saying to each other. (Mishler, 1991, p. 53)

Ongoing interviews and conversations that occurred between other adults and myself (about children) created clearer understandings about children and their learning environments. Ongoing interviews and understanding the teaching team’s perception of the Early Years Program also provided invaluable insights into the learning context in which the broader case itself was situated. Approaching the interview process as recursive, or one that repeatedly revisits new insights into the same topic, was important not only for a better understanding of the children, teachers, and educational context with whom/which I was studying, it also constructed a clearer dialogue between myself as a researcher and teachers at Green School who come from diverse backgrounds and cultures with potentially different ways of communicating than my own.

Research Dissemination to Green School Community. Over the span of approximately six months, I developed a rapport of trust and care with students, teachers, administrators and parents through daily contact, accessibility to answer questions or have conversations, and consistent transparency with regard to my research objectives and procedures. I was supported by each of these groups due to the emphasis the school places on community building, knowledge sharing, and continued efforts to evolve their programming. A significant component of completing a research process is follow-up with research participants.

After completing fieldwork and arriving back in Canada, I:

1. Compiled and distributed a report to teachers and administrators summarizing my time at Green School and within the Early Years Program, as well as outlined some of the preliminary thematic findings of my research, and topics that I was likely to address in my findings. In this document, I provided three of the program's strengths and three areas of improvement (as requested by Head of School Ibu Leslie Medima). This report included information about the next steps of the research process (i.e. plans for publications and conference presentations). Given that the vast majority of teachers were Indonesian, this report was written in both English, and translated into Bahasa Indonesia by a Green School employee.
2. Sent an abbreviated summary report to the parents of the child research participants. This report included information about the next steps of the research process (i.e. plans for publications, conference presentations, and photo consent for specific images).
3. Mailed a hard-copy of a picture book I created for the child research participants, detailing some of the lessons I learned from them during my stay. This was the physical representation of the "story" I referred to when asking for initial consent. Ibu Russlee (current Head of the Early Years Program) confirmed that she received the package and read it to the students in each of the classrooms.
4. E-mailed a copy of this thesis to Sanne VanOort and Ibu Suci Ratri to review before publication as per my intern contract.

Summary

Guided by three blended methodologies, the culmination of my chosen research methods complements a constructionist lens through ongoing meaning-making between myself as a researcher, the child and adult participants, and situating the data within the larger context of the case itself. My research design also provides a platform for which to critically understand the complexities of The Early Years Program with my research participants. As outlined above, my research covered a broad spectrum of information gathering. This has led to my data analysis, expansion of themes derived from my research questions, and my chosen forms of data representation outlined in the next chapter.

Data Analysis and Representation

I approached my research with the belief and practice that data "collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research" (Merriam, 1988, p. 123). This belief is grounded in my constructionist theoretical framework and methodological approaches (case study, ethnography, and grounded theory) which allows researchers to perpetually establish and re-establish meaning through the ongoing data collection process, as well as within the data itself. For example; as I collected data in the form of fieldnotes, conversations, photographs, artifacts, observation during daily immersion in the Early Years Program, and personal reflections of Green School and Bali, I was able to begin to direct my emergent findings into themes, focus my inquiry into more

specific questions during formal and informal interviews, draw from various theories as they arose, and better understand the contexts in which the research was evolving. Through daily field notes and reflective questioning, I looked for comparisons across data sources, “reading with and against the grain... identifying both what is there but also what is not” (Kendrick, personal communication, October 26, 2016) to identify consistencies, gaps and themes in content. In this sense, along with the child and adult research participants, I was engaging “in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach” (Creswell, 2007, p. 150) during the active co-construction of meaning within my research. The following sections will provide the detailed rationale for how I chose to thematically organize my data, and how this organization is legitimized and represented in the findings of my research.

Thematic Analysis

My findings were generated through categories found in my research questions: I wanted to know if and how the Green School conceptualized and enacted “children’s connections to nature” through the setting, culture, and curriculum of the school. Therefore, “setting,” “culture,” and “curriculum” became the broad, yet categorical themes from which I situated the data throughout fieldwork and the ongoing process of data analysis. Because there is variation in scope and breadth of themes in social science research (Guest et al, 2012), I intentionally chose “broad and sweeping constructs that link many kinds of expressions” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 87).

Setting/ Place: The convergence of a place’s biophysical attributes and processes; social and political processes; and cultural meanings (Cheng, Kruger, & Daniels, 2003; Gruenewald, 2003)

Culture: A complex system of cultural knowledge and narratives as well as symbols and material assets (Robertson, personal communication, 2019); including “people of diverse origins and social makeup who take part in the construction of a common world” (Wolf, 1982, p. 38)

Curriculum: “All the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside of school” (John Kerr in Kelly, 1983, p. 10); includes the subcategories of explicit, implicit, excluded, and extra-curricular activities.

Choosing broad definitions to guide my research allowed room for growth within, and co-construction of, these constructs during the data gathering and analysis process. These themes provided a platform to link ideas, events, actions, and develop theories which informed the perpetual evolving direction of inquiry, analysis, and understanding of the data.

Writing as Inquiry

My research was guided by and analyzed within three broad themes; “setting” “culture” and “curriculum.” Thematic analysis was an ongoing and evolving process guided by writing as a form of inquiry. Professor Emeritus Laurel Richardson, when discussing ethnographically-oriented narrative research, coined the term “Creative Analytical Processes (CAP) Ethnography.” Creative Analytical Processes, such as the process of writing, are

both “scientific”—in the sense of being true to a world known through empirical work and study—and “literary”—in the sense of expressing what one has learned through evocative writing techniques and forms. Although CAP ethnographers belong to a number of different disciplines, they tend to share some research/writing practices in common. These include using theories that challenge the grounds of disciplinary authority; writing on topics of social and personal importance; privileging nonhierarchical, collaborative, and/or multivocal writing; favoring self reflexivity; positioning oneself in multiple, often competing discourses; and the signature practice, writing evocatively, for different audiences in a variety of formats. (Richardson, 2004, p 1)

Like Richardson, I too have been encouraged within the academy “not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, that is, until my points were organized and outlined...[however] I realized that they cohered with mechanistic scientism and quantitative research” (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p. 960). As a new researcher, I was drawn to an analytical method that allowed me to creatively grapple with the complexities of intellectual and representational form, as well as develop my voice in the process. Writing as a form of inquiry, the idea that the process of writing informs your knowing, also takes into account my subjectivity and undeniable presence and participation in knowledge creation as a researcher; that the writing I produce “is always partial, local, and situational” (Richardson, 2005, p. 962). Writing as a form of inquiry allowed me to express this voice in the constant construction of meaning with both child and adult research participants.

While writing as a form of inquiry is indeed a flexible and creative endeavor, it is not void of rigorous critical thought or complexity. On the contrary; writing as a form of qualitative inquiry demands configuring and developing data and ideas in tandem through constant examination and re-examination. Creative analytic writing insists the researcher “adapt to the kind of political/social world we inhabit – a world of uncertainty” (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p. 962) and one with multitudes of realities. Within this practice, writing as a form of inquiry speaks to my theoretical framework of social constructionism that seeks to inductively understand the collective processes that shape our multiple realities. Guided by evolving data, writing as a form of inquiry combines

techniques from each of my chosen methodologies. When writing, for example, I constantly took into account “stories (as in narrative research)...processes, actions, or interactions (in grounded theory), cultural themes and how the culture-sharing group works that can be described or categorized (in ethnography), [and] a detailed description of the particular case or cases (in case study research)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 153). Writing throughout this process was my way of observing, listening, inviting collaboration with research participants, honoring new ways of knowing through their contributions, opening paths that led to new ways of questioning and participating. Writing was the active, evolving investigation into ideas, events, actions and developing theories within themes. Writing in the form of fieldnotes and reflections was therefore not merely a data collection method; ongoing writing was the process, the steady heartbeat, of how the data itself was analyzed and understood.

Representation of Findings

“Unlike quantitative work that can carry its meaning in its tables and summaries, qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960). The analytic process of writing as a form of inquiry acknowledges “the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962). I have chosen to represent the findings and discussion portion of this research study in two narratives. Each narrative is meant to provide a contextual understanding of the learning environment at Green School. These narratives were written in various forms throughout the research process, and then re-analyzed, expanded upon, and formatted upon returning from fieldwork.

The first narrative (titled “Air Suci / Holy Water”) begins to situate Green School within the setting of Bali and broader international landscape. This narrative represents a departure from the “Green School Bali” overview (detailed in Chapter 1) and offers a deeper, more enmeshed glimpse of the school’s relationship to greater context after more time spent in the field. Divided into three sections (The Subak, The Spring, and The River), I discuss interconnected concepts within the sociopolitical and environmental landscape of Bali and begin to build a case for examining complexity in educational settings. From a reflexive lens as a researcher positioning myself and the research within a new place, I interweave concerns related to pollution, growth, the “Green Revolution”, the “green economy”, and international service-oriented education into the story of the school’s founding and entrepreneurial educational focus. This section, and the questions that arise

within it, provides a foundation for the way in which the data within the EYP was analyzed and represented.

The next narrative (“The Currents”) then examines the Early Years Program within the context of Green school. Again divided into three sections that represent the guiding themes of my research (Setting, Culture, Curriculum), I offer vignettes of each theme as they arose throughout data gathering and analysis. ‘Setting’ introduces the EYP setting and overarching beliefs of the program, as well as begins to problematize the “connection to nature” narrative commonly found in ECEfS literature. ‘Culture’ recounts events leading up to Nyepi, a Balinese holiday celebrated by the school, and situates the EYP and ECEfS within a multicultural education framework. ‘Curriculum’ focuses on the institutional structures in which the EYP operates, and discusses power dynamics related to the ‘sustainability’ paradigm within the programming.

Like other researchers studying the learning environments of young children, I strived to create an emergent and “descriptive account, based on field observations and interviews, of the lives, activities, and experiences of children [and adults] in a particular place and time, and of the contexts—social, cultural, institutional, economic—that make sense of their behavior there and then” (LeVine, 2007, p. 247). Each of these vignettes reflects the analytic writing process; the evolution of thinking guided by my research participants and data; and the embrace of complexity within my research topic. The vignettes illustrate the departure from the standard definitions of the themes, and instead highlight nuances and complexities within them. The vignettes problematize the over-simplified representation of “children’s connection to nature” in research and practice within Green School’s Early Years Program. The vignettes highlight critical social issues not widely examined within research in the field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability at large. Each vignette offers insights into the overarching research questions: In what ways is Green School’s Early Years Program conceptualizing and enacting “children’s connections to nature” within the complex context of place? What implications does this have for children’s learning in the program? What implications does this have for the greater learning environment?

Summary

Data collection and analysis was a simultaneous process throughout fieldwork. Guided by three overarching themes (place, culture, curriculum), I employed writing as a method of analytic inquiry to construct the narratives represented as the findings within this thesis. This following work

speaks to the widespread call in ECEfS for scholars engage with more comprehensive, critical, and contextualized research in the field.



Findings



Figure 3.1 Gathering (top left)

Figure 3.2 Movement (top right)

Figure 3.3 Earth (bottom right)



Air Suci / Holy Water
The Subac, The Spring, The River

Figure 3.4 Minang Millennium Bridge / Ayung River

Air Suci / Holy Water **The Subak, The Spring, The River**

The Subak

Agama Tirtha (Balinese Hinduism) translates to “the religion of holy water.”

For over one thousand years, long before Dutch colonization of the island, the ecological management of water in Bali has been maintained through the ‘subak’ system; representing the physical order of ecological, spiritual, and social life on the island. In western terms, the subak system is “defined as all the major rice terraces irrigated from a single dam... arranged one below the other down the river canyons, a single canal, usually of some length” (Geertz, 1967, p. 230). This system, which maximizes rainwater that would otherwise spill and evaporate too quickly down the volcanic slopes of the island terrain, allocates crop planting cycles, flow regulation, and resource distribution. Overseen by goddess Dewi Danu, water passes through hundreds of temples on its journey from Pura Ulum Danu Batur (the supreme water temple) at the source crater lake of Mount Batur. The supreme temple at Mount Batur resides at the center of a spatial mandala, or cosmic map, for which life-giving water flows in every direction (Lansing, 1991, p. 73). The water temples downstream, overseen by local priests, also manage community agreements, social events, and religious ceremonies. In Bali, as with cultures indigenous to place worldwide, water is seen “in terms of spirituality, culture, reverence and the ways of being connected to a place, and how place sustains being” (Hawke, 2012, p. 236).

The subak and water temple system is a synthesis of function, religion, and culture. In 2012, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization deemed the subak system and its major temples as one of their living world heritage sites (UNESCO, 2017) for its physical representation of the philosophical concept of Tri Hita Karana – harmony in the relationships between humans, with the environment, and with the Gods. In Bali, these make up the balance of the “three causes of well-being.” Water, and all of its functions from growing rice to offering blessings are suci (holy), existing interrelated in theory in practice. However, the water system that unites both resource and spirituality has been highly challenged by globalization.

Industrialized countries and the “Green Revolution” traveled to Bali in the 1970s, bringing with it a promise for modernized agriculture that would alleviate world hunger and bolster the Indonesian economy. Balinese rice farmers adopted new, government-mandated water management and crop yielding practices; displacing flocks of ducks with clouds of pesticides, damming centuries-

old timed flows of water, replacing native rice with high-yield strains, and putting aside calendars set by the Pura Ulum Danu Batur and local subaks to increase number of crops and accommodate for perpetual product output. However, “after a brief period of productivity, rice yields plummeted as the result of severe water shortages and unprecedented pest and disease outbreaks” (Wei et. al., 2013, p.1). The system was segregated; dismembered; prioritized for capital. As the social and organizational fabric of the subak system mended over the decades that followed, the Green Revolution, with its promises of equity and innovation, had disturbed the regenerative balance of water/life on Bali; and ushered the island into an era of international involvement at levels never before seen. As a newcomer to Bali, I can see the effects.

The Spring

My new home (a five-minute walk from Green School), the temple, the people, the jungle, the river, the rain and the spring exist intertwined. I watch in awe of the rituals carried out for centuries before my arrival, and the visual and symbolic manifestation of place, culture, practice and being in this new environment. I sit still, hyper aware of the internal pulsing current of intrusion and my own tourist gaze as I perch on the wooden doorframe of my porch, piecing together my place in this reality.

And yet I continue to watch; the ceremony from the local community’s temple adjacent to Green School streams down the dirt road in threads of pure laundered white – I admire the pressed shirts of the men, washed and dried in warungs by the side of the road next to evening garbage fires in the street, looking so clean. Women in skin-tight lace Kabaya, flowers in their tied back hair. Gold sashes. Ikat, checked sarongs. Fast panging metallic gamelan as unbroken background music. Incense. Red lips. Filed teeth. Foil packaged chocolate treats, snakefruit, green oranges, rice, cassava cake offerings piled high on banana leaves stapled into shallow boxes. Plastic flip-flops and sandals smack the earth as they carry the temple community down the road to the spring. Gurgling, nestled into the surrounding jungle, unassuming, it is marked only by a dirt footpath and a carved limestone marker up a slight incline in the chirping foliage. The local source of “air suci” – holy water.

“Danone wants to buy the holy spring at the end of this road, here, in Abiensemal.”

There are rumors amongst the Indonesian Green School employees and interns.

“But the locals are protesting it” they tell me.

Danone, a multi-national corporation wants to buy, privatize, package holy water next to Green School in plastic bottles. This event could be seen as a small-scale reality of what is happening to the island in a larger historical sense as a whole. Foreigners insert themselves into the heart of the island, jetting in on a carbon footprint larger than that of entire villages. They come with plastic: the new-era's disease for rapid environmental asphyxiation. And they package. And they bottle. And they create straws from which to drink out of coconuts. And cling wrap to package produce. And plastic bags to transport pre-made canang sari (daily offerings) that, traditionally, represent the sacrifice of time it takes to make and present them to the gods twice a day. Without a waste-management system large enough to accommodate for the mountains of garbage, nor the landmass to contain disposal, the trash piles up; whatever is not illegally burned is flung off the sides of motorbikes, shoveled into the sand, dumped down rivers, only to be flushed to sea and returned to the shores.

Waste is everywhere in Bali. By weight; thousands of new tons dumped each day (Role Foundation, 2017). In sight; as far as each coastal horizon. Plastic is a physical catalyst of increased climate change; and Indonesia follows China as the world's largest ocean polluter (Lueng, 2016). Not only are tons of waste being dumped within the island daily, rainy season and the agitated ocean currents redistribute the world's trash onto the collective tens of thousands of miles of shorelines. One month after arriving to Bali in the heart of monsoon season, I participated in an island-wide beach cleanup spearheaded by Green School students. The event, titled "One Island One Voice / Satu Pulau Satu Suara," was a collective of nearly 12,000 people picking up 40 tons of garbage over 55 locations on the island (One Island One Voice, 2017). Nearly 90% of the collective trash was plastic. Danone was one of the sponsors of the event.

Events like the beach cleanup and organizations like One Island One Voice are commonplace at Green School. Developed as an educational model to combine sustainability education, community, the natural environment, and entrepreneurial projects to help alleviate the environmental strain on the island arise from classroom inquiry, student or parent interest, and experiential learning opportunities. It is these three foci combined, Green School insists, that produce innovative "Green Leaders" for a rapidly changing world.

Purposeful Learning Programme

Green School educates for sustainability through community-integrated, entrepreneurial learning in a wall-less, natural environment. Our holistic, student-guided approach inspires and empowers us to be green leaders.

Passionate Community of Learners

We can only change the world together as communities. At Green School students, teachers, parents, staff and our local village neighbours learn, work and play together to inspire and encourage each other to live purposeful lives.

Wall-less Learning Environment

Experience the wall-less, natural campus that is an architectural wonder in the middle of the jungle on the magical island of Bali. The bamboo palace inspires open minds, open hearts and a great love for our surroundings.

(Green School Bali, 2017)

Green School creates a place where students explicitly learn to hone their entrepreneurial skills to [re]shape the world embedded within an expanding ‘green economy.’ The ‘green economy’ - a general belief that “[global] economics can and should come to the aid of environmental policy” (United Nations, n.d.) through a more “environmentally aware business community” (Huckle et al., 2014) - is in line with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development goals.

At the visionary level, UNEP (2011) considers the green economy as: “An economy that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

At the operational level, the green economy is seen as one whose growth in income and employment is driven by investments that:

- Reduce carbon emissions and pollution
- Enhance energy and resource efficiency
- Prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

These include investments in human and social capital, and recognize the central position of human well-being and social equity as core goals promoted by growth in income and employment.

(United Nations Environment Management Group, 2011, p. 31)

Beginning in grade school at Green School, ‘learning’ and ‘doing’ are often geared towards working within these green fringes of the pervasive, growth-oriented world order. ‘Sustainable’ clothing lines are created using the world’s leading ‘environmentally friendly’ clothing resource practices, skateboard companies are founded by making decks out of beach plastic, classrooms take

out loans through the school bank to fund a business raising chickens and selling their organic eggs at the school's farmer's market. Green School seems to excel at providing experiential opportunities to work within the business and entrepreneurial system to infuse it with innovative projects. This is unsurprising, as the school was founded by a businessman: John Hardy.

Green School was founded as an alternative educational model by a Canadian expatriate, who in his own words in a now-famous TED Talk, describes his personal experience with formal schooling:

I grew up in a very small village in Canada, and I'm an undiagnosed dyslexic. I had a really hard time in school. In fact, my mother told me eventually that I was the little kid in the village who cried all the way to school. I ran away. I left when I was 25 years old to go to Bali, and there I met my incredible wife, Cynthia, and together, over 20 years, we built an amazing jewelry business. (Hardy, 2010)

John Hardy moved to Bali in 1975 and founded a high-end jewelry business on the island that, over the proceeding decades, became a multi-million-dollar international company. Centered upon use of local Balinese silver crafting techniques and ancient cultural designs, the company touts “creating one-of-a-kind jewelry and preserving the rich heritage of Bali” (About John Hardy, 2017). In the company's words, John Hardy Jewelry promotes sustainability in its business practices:

We are committed to nurturing both our community and artisans, with our Ubud Design Studio and Workshop serving as a central hub. We support artisans—women, men, and whole families—through our “Jobs for Life” program, which ensures the unique jewelry making tradition is passed on for generations and apprentices will one day become masters. We are committed to sustainable practices using 100% reclaimed gold, silver, and ethically sourced gemstones, and to our work preserving the natural landscape of Bali. For each purchase from the Bamboo Collection, we plant a select number of bamboo seedlings. We planted over 1 million bamboo seedlings to date as part of our “Wear Bamboo, Plant Bamboo” initiative, ensuring that John Hardy and our clients continue to give back to our community, protect the environment, and build a sustainable future together. (About John Hardy, 2017)

This statement seems like a story you can really get behind. Put upon a business-model pedestal, the company is endorsed by celebrities who have track records or promoting the ‘green’ movement. Even upon return from fieldwork, a family friend of my parents proudly flashed me her John Hardy bracelet, explaining that bamboo had been planted because of the purchase. She was doing her part, just like the company was, to improve the world through “conscious consumerism,” of aiding in

replanting portions of a far-away natural environment, supporting cultural heritage and local communities, while owning a piece of beautiful, traditional design and locally created jewelry.

“JOHN HARDY JEWELRY”, in all capitals, is the first billboard you see as you leave Ngurah Rai international airport before entering the capitol city of Denpasar. John Hardy has certainly left a mark on the island. However, I can’t help but think there is more to the image of promoting sustainable practices to appeal to the sustainable consumer. This type of business model seems to only mask the ill effects of an inherently destructive system; one whose path is paved by growth-promotion; one that comes at the cost of others.

Murmurings of discontent simmer underneath the picturesque surface – like anything, there is always another side to examine. In the case of western-driven international relations abroad, it is often at the expense of local populations. Published in an Indonesian academic journal, Kadek Julia Mahadewi (2015) outlines the effects of Copyright Law No. 28 involving silver handicrafts. Creating pieces using traditional Balinese designs, two Balinese silversmiths were accused of breaching copyright owned by two foreign parties – one being John Hardy. The findings of the paper, based in empirical law, suggest:

...first, the type of law protection provided by the state towards traditional motifs is in the form of preventive and repressive law protection. Second, legal culture of silversmiths in Bali view traditional motifs as a work substance with work orientation is for a living so that value system being adopted by most silversmiths in Bali is not to register their works into the Copyright system. (Mahadewi, 2015, p. 205)

In short, this article outlines the reality that traditional, cultural, centuries-old Balinese artistic designs are being copyrighted by foreign parties who then are the only ones who can profit from them. John Hardy may be guilty of both cultural appropriation and cultural capitalization. If this is the case, what does it say about the entrepreneurial foundation that he may have built into Green School?

My thoughts about this topic have been driven by a growing belief that the current capitalistic system of which we are a part is, by design, ultimately destructive. When applied to sustainability, others have recognized this too. “The starting point for a critical theorization of education for sustainability is the ideological conception that unsustainability, arises from the social, economic and political systems, such as that of the ‘dominant social paradigm’ (DSP) (see Milbrath, 1989), and from the worldviews and institutional structures that support that paradigm” (Springett, 2005, p. 147). As many see it, the dominant social paradigm can be described as “common values,

beliefs, and shared wisdom about the physical and social environments” which constitute a society’s basic “worldview” (Pirages, 1977, p. 6). Our current, western dominant social paradigm of growth, authors argue, is one that was “formed during a bygone era of extraordinary abundance, and thus much of it (commitments to *laissez faire*, individualism, progress and growth) is no longer adaptive in an era of ecological limits” (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1984, p. 1014). Over the past decade, scholars have declared the new era in which we have created within the Anthropocene as the “Capitolocene” (Surprise, 2013; Moore 2015) – targeting the capitalistic system humans have created and operate within, not human nature, as the culprit for mass environmental and social degradation.

When applying a critical lens to education for sustainability, it is unavoidable not to understand “the role the capitalist political economy plays in the creation of *unsustainability*” (italics mine) (Springett, 2005, p. 147). Businesses, often promoting consumption and growth, ultimately feed into a system that pushes along a world-order that historically uses the environment as a means to a destructive, economic end. Educators in ECE are beginning to recognize this too – professor Iris Duhn notes that capitalism essentially “drives home the point that nature is an empty signifier at this historical moment for many Westernized adults, who may socialise as much as educate the next generation into such a status quo” (Duhn, 2012, p. 1363). Residing within the contradiction of “sustainable entrepreneurial education” Green School seems to operate under the belief that if you can’t create an alternative to capitalism, it is far better to ‘green’ the current system in which we are becoming more globally entrenched.

Yet the waves of growth and expansion continue to beat repeatedly upon the shores. Bali’s expatriate population expands with each new family moving across the world to send their child to Green School. Land is subdivided; contracts are signed between locals and foreigners for thirty-year leases. Rice terraces are filled in, built upon with villas; homes; hotels; hostels. Privatized. Land acquisition, tourism of place and culture, plastic consumption, capitalization of everything at the current rate is inherently unsustainable - and being a part of the system that perpetuates these practices raises undeniable contradictions for the “Greenest School on Earth,” and the families, and researchers like me, that fly for days to study there; that grow to call the island a second home.

“Degrowth” is the “ideological reaction to overconsumption that calls for a period of planned economic contraction” (Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Call for Papers, December 15, 2017; D’Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2015) that would slow the precarious momentum of capitalistic growth that is crashing, full force, into the wellbeing of our shared realities. “If the desire for growth causes economic, social, and environmental crises...then growth cannot be the solution” (D’Alisa,

Demaria & Kallis, 2015, xx). In the realm of efforts being made to quell environmental issues and social inequalities in the places we live, visit, tour - it only seems to make sense to begin to shape our societies around such vastly different modes of operation. However, tourism is one of the world's largest consumer industries and hence the main form of economic expansion (Fletcher, 2011) for the island of Bali. Tourism brings more money to locals, and with more money brings more opportunity to participate in the world outside of the bounded coastline of the island, or island chains making up Indonesia. Tourism does not always have to cause economic and social hardship. However, both participating in and restricting growth are two storied sides of the same coin.

I wonder - who would truly be in charge of this growth or degrowth? Who would determine its direction? I can't help but feel conflicted that the people tied to the creation of many of the problems facing the island of Bali (the tourists, the transplants, the outsiders) are generally the ones who are touted as spearheading the solutions; westerners, and the Green School community, are hailed as the environmental saviors. As Indigenous scholar Dr. Marie Battiste asserts in the book "Teaching as Activism: Equity Meets Environmentalism" (2005) - "You can't be the global doctor if you're the colonial disease" (p. 121).

The field of international service learning has developed a strong critical component to their examination of "volunteerism" and volunteer mentality abroad; addressing the power dynamics within North Americans as 'helping' and their target populations as those 'receiving help.' In an address to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico in 1968, Ivan Illich contested the notion of westerners with an educational agenda on foreign soil:

Next to money and guns, the third largest North American export is the U.S. idealist, who turns up in every theater of the world: the teacher, the volunteer, the missionary, the community organizer, the economic developer, and the vacationing do-gooders. Ideally, these people define their role as service. Actually, they frequently wind up alleviating the damage done by money and weapons, or "seducing" the "underdeveloped" to the benefits of the world of affluence and achievement. (Illich, 1968, n.p.)

According to Illich, efforts made by institutions are often counterproductive or contradictory to their original aims. Although founded on an idealistic premise of environmentalism and leadership in a local context, Green School still resides within the contradictory institutionalism that Illich critiques. Green School is an internationally renowned hub for these like-minded people; the good-intentioned westerners creating NGOs, social enterprises, holding fundraisers, marketing community efforts to educate the locals about plastic use, recycling, and sustainability. Even as I

write this section of my thesis with the intention to clarify a paradox of complexity, I acknowledge my own narrative might be one that unintentionally reeks of essentialism and over-simplification itself; it might be read as perpetuating the idea of westerners 'doing' something to a 'helpless community.' This is not my intention. Yet as I grow to understand the intricacies of a school community that is applauded for using banana leaves instead of disposable plates during lunch, I wonder how innovative this western sustainability education really is. It is undeniable that only decades ago - before mass outsider influence on the island - the only thing being dumped down the Ayung river were coconut husks, banana leaves, ash from organic matter and incense, small white, red, yellow, blue flowers ...disintegrating, decomposing, depositing nutrients as they decayed into the jungle soil, or were churned back into the clay floors of the river beds, or dissolved in the waves set out to sea. Not masses of imported plastic.

Indigenous scholars recognize the complexity of addressing issues involving education in Indigenous settings: "we must consider the cultural and historical context, particularly in terms of who is determining what the rules of engagement are to be, and how those rules are to be implemented" (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998, p.138). Beyond the string of conversations with Indonesian Green School employees, I cannot confirm whether or not Danone in fact wanted to purchase the spring water. I cannot detail the intricacies or outcomes of the copyright case against John Hardy. The fact that these stories exist, however hushed and obscure, represent an underlying current of disconnection in this outwardly harmonious atmosphere. They speak to an institution promoting sustainability that is embedded in an interwoven, at times extremely uncomfortable, and sometimes outright unsustainable, context.

I shift my focus from the temple procession to the large drops of rain splattering on the tile porch. The mother dog and her puppies take cover under a blanket of corrugated sheet metal. Roosters and chickens scurry underneath the cassava vines in the field. Clouds appear, releasing monsoon. I sit still; body unmoving, mind racing. I write: "Here is plastic. Here is convenience. Here is capitalism. Here is tourism. Here are ways to interact more than on the margins of globalization, of which you are now dependent. Now, please, let us teach you how to go back to what you were doing beforehand as we continue to fly into your home, and drink your bottled holy water."

The River

Winding through the interior jungle topography of the island lives the Ayung River, creating the natural delineation between the land of the banjar (neighbourhood) Sibang Kaja and the Green School. Strung across banks adorned with drooping coconut trees and black lava stone boulders floats the Sumatran-inspired “Minang Bamboo Bridge” or “Millennial Bridge.” Built out of locally sourced bamboo with a traditional alang-alang thatched roof, the platform is proudly presented as the first construction project on campus. Utilized as undeniably powerful symbolism, the bridge connects the two communities inhabiting either side of the divide. An offering, and invitation; two worlds meeting.

Canadian curriculum scholar and philosopher Ted Aoki problematizes the metaphor of bridging: “The metaphor of ‘bridging two worlds’ begins to provide us with an image to help us understand what it means when two people meet. But like everyday metaphor of ‘understanding each other through contact,’ I fear that bridging metaphor is more opaque than transparent and fails to lead us to our understanding” (Aoki, 2005, p. 219). He understands that meeting in locality does not grow the empathetic roots needed to forge connection or deepen understanding beyond the illusion of immediate or even sustained contact over time. Readiness and awareness to form connection are first steps, but, like a bridge, over-pass what truly embodies complexity and depth – what both worlds share; the water flowing underneath.

The Ayung River, while creating a physical divide of land, also represents a common lifeblood of the island to all of those who inhabit it. It provides a place to wash clothing and bathe. It feeds rice fields that feed us. It travels through complex Subak systems and water temples. It is blessed by Dewi Danu, the water goddess. Lest we lose touch, the majority of our human bodies (like the earth, of which we are an inextricable part) are water; “coursing through our veins as blood, and our tissues, organs, and bones...” (Hawke, 2012, p. 242). Water is physically, metaphorically, symbolically, and traditionally the embodiment of interconnectivity; churning currents flowing together, existing in perpetual momentum and change. “No individual stream of water can ever be extracted and analyzed as representative of the whole” yet the river “inextricably flows into dynamic connectivity” (Banack et. al, 2017, p. 3). We are not just bridging a duality of ‘here to there.’ We are diving into what is shared.

In the case of trying to address and reshape total environmental deterioration that, like a storm cloud, looms above the collective ‘us’, we arrive in a time where education needs to lean into the complexities that tie us together. Critically examining the contexts in which we research, learn,

live, has been an aim of education for sustainability for decades – and needs to continually be readdressed and pushed further when considering the expanding, interrelated realities of which we are a part.

Education for sustainability is seen as having the power to guide people in reflection and action as they engage with the discourses of sustainability and sustainable development. It calls for a process of critical inquiry that encourages us to explore the complexity and implications of sustainability and the economic, political, social, cultural, technological and environmental forces that foster or impede it (Huckle, 1996). (Springett, 2005, p. 147)

I believe learning communities, and the contexts of which they are a part, are in need of such difficult and critical discourses. Green School teachers and administrators, along with members of the school community who have experienced peaks and valleys of a community built from the ground up, will be the first to tell you that while the school makes strides in the field of education for sustainability, the model has by no means reached actualization – and, given the school’s pedagogical and curricular recognition that change is what brings innovation and growth, most likely never will. Better understanding the interrelated systems of which we are all a part – even if we exist in, aim to alleviate, and also consequentially further the problematic effects of globalization and environmentalism – is essential in our shared world. Here within lies the complexities and contradictions of context; a place inhabited by multiplicities of realities.



The Currents

Setting, Culture, Curriculum

Figure 3.5 Connection

The Currents

Setting, Culture, Curriculum

Setting

I ducked under artwork strung on wire and held in place with wooden clothespins entering into the bamboo cocoon-like hut, folding like a leaf around the tiny inhabitants of the classroom. Scattered around the room were a dozen the three and four-year-old “Geckos”, barefoot, sitting at or hopping between small bamboo tables, draping costumes on each other, imaginative playing with the teachers, drawing, putting together puzzles. The Geckos’ curious eyes intermittently followed me with apprehension and examination on my first day. In the nest of the classroom, one more adult body took up quite a bit of space. The children were used to the strangers who walked by the Early Years Program on the daily public tours, telling tourists “No photos!” when they reached for their cameras to snap a picture. Although I was without a notebook and camera for my first few weeks as we got to know each other, I appeared here not only as someone unknown from beyond the gate; I was sitting on the floor with them in the private space of their classroom.

I inhaled deeply, held my breath, and wondered how long their distance with me would last...
...until later that afternoon.

When the Geckos classroom teachers Ibu Kadek and Ibu Pipit told the small Geckos that they were “going to show Ibu Annie Green School,” the Geckos uneasiness evolved into almost ecstatic companionship as we left the classroom for the weekly “nature walk” around various parts of Green School’s large campus. The Geckos leapt, and hopped, and toddled, and balanced, and ran, with hand-holding in sporadic rotation, along the stone and dirt pathways that wove through the Learning Neighbourhoods. Without prompting, they pointed at trees and blossoms and told me what they were: “I love rosella!” “Mango! Yum yum yum”. They knew which berries to pick and eat, and where to find them on the ground. They checked on the rabbits in their pen and crouched to cautiously examine the erratic flapping chickens in their run. They were fascinated to see bugs at their feet, dragonflies float by, spiders hang high in trees. They chatted with each other, with the teachers, with exclamation into the foliage. It was not uncommon to hear conversations amongst children and their natural surroundings. During a nature walk weeks later, we were spotting “purple things” along the way. N ran ahead of the group and kneeled by a flower:

“Hello flower.” N nods her head and smiles exaggeratedly, eyes wide. “Can I please pick you?”

Ibu Kadek asks what she is doing.

“I’m asking the flower if I can pick it!” N nods her head up and down again. “It said yes.”

The introduction they gave me to the landscape was fueled by a sense of what I initially described as ownership – not over the place itself, but ownership of the knowledge around it. They knew so much; not only about the physical place, but of how to interact with it with care. What they did not verbalize they showed in their warmth and curiosity towards the world surrounding them, the world of which they too were an inextricable part. Even as I write this, I fall short when recounting how this type of sustained energy feels with young learners in every lived moment. That first day, and for all days spent in sheer exploration outside, I wished there was a way to take notes without your hands.

The Early Years Program was constructed with an intentional focus on fostering, first and foremost, a love of the earth. American sociobiologist E.O. Wilson promoted a well-known theory he termed the “Biophilia Hypothesis.” Bio (life) philia (love) relates to the genetic affiliation that human beings, through centuries of genetic evolution, have with the natural world and living things (Wilson, 1986). Based on the findings that emerged from my research, it is through providing experiences (such as learning outdoors) that evoke ‘feelings’ (such as ‘love’ and ‘kindness’), that the Early Years program first aims to foster a sense of connection between their young learners and the natural world. When asked how the Early Years program at Green School is creating an educational program for the children to be “agents of change” for the environment, Head of School Leslie Medima stated that the importance resided first in forming these types of relationships:

It’s part of their daily lexicon. It’s part of their talk. It’s part of what they talk to everybody about...I think the whole shift in environmental education and changing the world is not just about the environment and we think of it in multiple ways. Wellbeing of self and others, society, we do say economy (but that’s more about the value of certain things to individuals and to others and how you use that for good). Anyway, so there is huge, specific thought put into that for each of these kids in the hopes that they understand how it’s all interconnected. But kindness is incredibly important because at its core if you are kind all of those values follow. So, you’re kind to yourself, you’re kind to others, you’re kind to the environment, and you’re kind to your community. Hands down, done and dusted. (Medima, personal interview, May 3, 2017)

Instead of providing me a curriculum handout with checklists and charts, and rather than focusing on the mechanics of learning situations (i.e. recycling, planting seedlings, etc.), she alluded to the much more blatant component of learning happening at Green School, and especially within the EYP; the experience and process *itself*.

Fostering these deeper ‘feelings’ of ‘interconnectedness’ (Naess & Jickling, 2000) within the EYP seemed to stem from an overarching concern with the dis-connectedness the field of EfS promotes at large. Even though literature in the field of ECEfS is written about under the assumption that humans have an innate connection to “nature” – this theory underpins much of environmental education, “as opposed to the later development of education for sustainability which specifically includes the ‘three pillars’ of social, economic and environmental sustainability as interconnected domains” (Sommerville & Williams, 2015, p. 107). Educator and place-based writer David Sobel popularized the concept of “ecophobia” in the realm of education in the late 1990s. Within Eco (home) phobia (fear), Sobel warns of premature concept abstraction in education (introducing concepts that are intangible in early childhood curriculum). An example from education for sustainability might include climate change. Concept abstraction is one factor in creating disconnection where children become overloaded with the world’s environmental problems and develop an aversion to nature. The pressing issues the earth, and humans as a part of it, is encountering knocks on the door of the precarious and often protected intellectual and experiential space of childhood; testing the fine line between provoking occasions of discovery (Edwards, 1993) and “imposing ideas” (Hewett, 2001, p. 97) within early childhood programming. “Learning to care for all life on earth, when topics like climate change emphasize the urgency of engagement at all levels (Chawla and Cushing 2007), inevitably introduces ‘reality’ into the protected space of childhood” (Duhn, 2012, p.21).

During interviews with both school administrators and Early Years Program teachers, there were repeated concerns with how the overarching intensity of sustainability interest and action within the school was “filtering down” in overbearing, negative ways to their students. Ibu Russlee, the Starlings lead teacher, noticed this happening during weekly school-wide assemblies:

So, we love to go do assemblies, but, for me, one of the negative effects of the assembly is that often environmental issues are presented, and I don't actually want our children to be exposed to those at this age. But they also experience so many amazing learning moments from assemblies like performances and dance and music, but they might come to this at our table and say, “Oh, she has palm oil and palm oil kills orangutans.” For example, I ask, “How do you know that?” or “Where did you hear that?” “Oh, from the assembly.” So, we might think that it goes over their head,

but they actually absorb so many messages, so I'm just really conscious about not adding to that because we can't shelter them completely from it, but they will get some. (Ibu Russlee, personal interview, May 18, 2017)

When asked about whether they thought children should learn about and contribute to solving the problems facing us today, or if they thought that children should be separated from those issues until they are older, the Geckos teachers, Ibu Pipit and Ibu Kadek, agreed that children should be introduced to the issues – albeit in a gradual and positive way:

...fostering critical thinking is part of it as well. I mean, really, everything that the children have right now or are going to have is-- or do, is going to impact their own future. So, if from a very young age they can actually realize what's going on and try to be part of the solution then they will have a better future, not the other way around. I mean, a lot of bad things happening here. In Indonesia it's like most of us, when we were kids, and then when we are adult and even a little bit older, we just don't care. I mean, here's the jungle. You can just plant palm oil, whatever, to make money. I mean, that's part of the problem, right? But they don't see-- to me, it's like I know already that the jungle's been here first. I know already that if you cut the tree this is what's going to happen. But because I don't care, I don't want to be part of the solution. I just do that. So that was my basic education, which is not right. And if every kid can be introduced-- we're going to say introduced because there's no way we are going to push the kid to do something, right? They just have to follow what is best for them. But if we keep on introduce them with good things, then they will eventually doing good things as well. So I personally agree with that. (Ibu Pipit, personal communication, April 12, 2018)

The idea of children contributing to alleviate environmental issues was important to Ibu Pipit; having grown up in Indonesia and attributing much of the country's environmental destruction (such as forest slashing to grow palm trees for oil) to a lack of care from lack of education about these topics. Introducing sustainability education that addresses “good things” at an early age, she believes, will carry forth through children's continued development of doing “good things.” Perhaps “appropriate” awareness now will plant a seed for future activism later. However, she goes on to note that the extreme nature of the school and school community (i.e. parent) focus on sustainability issues indeed filter down to students in negative ways:

And you know, having said that, we actually have very extreme kids and it's really-- I mean, for us, for me, it's shocking, really shocking manners like, “I'm not going to eat ice cream. It has palm oil in it.” [Laughter]. “Okay.” Yeah. Some kids are already brought up that way by their parents, yeah, and especially if you see that they are vegan or vegetarian, yeah, they will have such a very strong view about the world. [Laughter]. Seriously, yeah.

And the way they can survive is building this wall that they are actually the right one, you're the wrong one. That's how kids cope and it's not healthy for them. I mean, most of the kids that I encounter it's like that. They feel like they are the rightest in the world. Everyone one else wrong. "Why do you eat chicken? You know that chicken is [laughter]--" Oh, my God. (Ibu Pipit, personal interview, April 12, 2017)

Over her eight years of teaching, Ibu Pipit expressed her observations of student judgement surrounding environmental issues stemming from influences outside of the Early Years Program – such as parents and assemblies. I too recorded a number of conversations or exclamations over the course of my fieldwork that preschoolers would bring up unprompted by teachers or myself:

NV looking at woodchips on the ground by the lunch table during free play:
"Oh no! These came from trees and now they're dead! They need to go back to the earth!"
NV picks up woodchips and throws them past the fence and into the wild foliage, then encourages N to do the same.

Ibu Kadek explains the steps of an art project making a caterpillar to the group of Geckos.

Ibu Kadek: "What is this made out of?"

Geckos: "Eggs!"

Ibu Kadek: "Yes, egg carton. Then we cover it with paper."

N: "That's plastic!" She points to the egg carton with a concerned, frantic look on her face.

Ibu Kadek: "No, it is actually paper"

N: "Oh, well it looks like plastic—"

While the topics of woodchips and plastic may have indeed taken place as conversations sometime before I arrived in the Early Years Program, these instances, as with others, seemed to cause the young three and four-year-old Geckos concern as they pieced together bits of information within their educational surroundings.

As previously outlined in detail in Chapter 1, Green School attracts families who all make aspects of sustainability a central focus in their lives in some way or another. Parents who relocate to a different country to educate their children for sustainability alone alludes to a highly committed, hyper-aware, and financially well-resourced community. Although embracing societal environmental topics was taking place in depth in the older years (primary through high school) interestingly enough, the Early Years Program was viewed as a physical and ideological reprieve from the almost

overly-informed, activist-oriented greater school community. When asked about fostering a specific environment within the Early Years Program, Head of School Leslie Medima had this to say:

One of the biggest difficulties we talk about as educators is this line between ecophilia and ecophobia and how you cross that line of fear or cross that line of hopelessness in children. And it's possible to do so, especially when you're a school like Green School and you talk a lot about the issues of the world and the big problems of the world. Where is that line? Well, with the little ones, we talk very, very, very carefully about ecophilia, and they keep that for everybody else as well. So you'll go to these assemblies. And I get nervous because the big kids are just 'death, destruction,' [laughter], and da, da, da, da, da, da. And the little kids. And sometimes I would get nervous about the little kids hearing that, and I'm trying to cut it -- because their incredibly important role is to hold that optimism for everyone else. Incredibly important because the rest of us are going to go through crises of faith in that journey at multiple times, and they never will. So that's an incredibly important part of that process. ... But we are very purposefully doing it. In our curriculum and in our discussions and in our training, we talk very clearly about ecophilia and the years where that's important and how to build that and how to not go too fast into the zone of despair [laughter]. I mean, we're very conscientious about that, and so that's purposeful. (Medima, personal interview, May 3, 2017)

In this sense, it was clear that the Early Years Program was viewed as a place to shelter or 'place hold' – a pristine environment to foster relationships to the earth first and foremost. Like David Sobel (1999), the Green School's Early Years Program focuses on the power of place-based education and advocates battling 'ecophobia' with 'ecophilia' – "supporting children's biological tendency to bond with the natural world" (Sobel, 1999, p. 4) before introducing topics that might become too abstracted. Fostering "ecophilia" was central in the Early Years Program, and the focus on building connections to the natural world was infused into every aspect of the physical and built environment, and occurred constantly through experiential, lived moments.

A gets bitten by an ant on the playground and begins to cry.
After the classroom support teacher helps her, she still is crying.
She approaches two friends, N, M, and NA and says: "I got bitten by an ant!"
N: "Lets hold hands girls."
A: "An ant bit me!"
N: "That's not very nice."
Pause.
A: "Well...yeah."
M: "Well – you need to use your shoes" she says gently, smiling.

With each passing day I could examine any given interaction between children and nature,

such as the one above, and see how it connected to the growing body of theoretical and practical knowledge forming in place-based environmental education surrounding “children’s connection to nature”; ecophilia/ecophobia (Sobel, 1999), ethic of care (Chawla & Cushing, 2007), place-consciousness (Gruenewald, 2003), the indoor/outdoor binary (Zink & Burrows, 2008), risky play (Sandseter, 2009), benefits of nature contact for children (Chawla, 2015), play-based learning (Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2013), forest pedagogies (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013), nature as third teacher (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007). Each interaction could be analyzed and supported by one of these approaches to highlight and clarify the importance of the child’s “connection to nature” narrative.

The wider notion of ‘connection,’ however, interested me more than analyzing these collections of individual interactions themselves. With blatant, beautiful examples of children connecting with the natural environment occurring daily in front of me, I could have written an entire thesis with one week’s worth of data if I chose to focus solely on these types of declarative statements and easily observable interactions of children and ‘nature’. Indeed, the types of idyllic images and experiences being produced in the sheltered bamboo community secluded the middle of a wild, green jungle are enticing. These privileged experiences are often idealized in the rhetoric of outdoor and environmental educators (Preston 2014), yet, as discussed in the literature review section of this thesis, perpetuate an unexamined relationship narrative between “children” and “nature” within their learning contexts at large.

Dr. Maureen Kendrick offered this advice to me before fieldwork began: “Look for what is there, but also look against the grain. Take note of what is not there.” Within the Early Years Program, the natural environment was there. Faculty and administrative intention to foster this interconnectedness with the youngest of learners was there. In my fieldnotes, concrete examples of what I and other researchers might uncritically conceptualize as children’s connection to nature were happening there. However, after an extensive amount of time spent in the field, I began to focus on the layers of connection that existed intertwined between children and what the ‘environment’ actually entails; the layers of inseparable natural, cultural, political, historical, economic realities of the greater place in which they are learning. What are we missing as researchers, practitioners, human beings if we only focus on what is easily observable? What authentic connections to place are we encouraging children to make, when we approach ‘place’ and ‘the environment’ as one-dimensional; created, and perceived to exist, within a bubble? What are we gaining from the experience and process *itself* when those experiences and processes are not contextualized? Fostering

these deeper ‘feelings’ of ‘interconnectedness’ – as the Early Years Program aims to do - also requires commitment to deeper examination of the complexities of interconnectedness.

From my research with the Early Years Program at Green School, I gathered ample evidence that there is significant concern amongst educators, parents, and academics about the education for sustainability movement severing the development of deep, purposeful connections. I believe that this is not only true between child and nature relationships within programming, but argue this may be happening between programs themselves and the places in which they are situated. I argue that the field of ECEfS, whose programming is expanding internationally as well as beginning to be researched in more diverse locations worldwide, engage more thoroughly in the interconnectedness of social learning, context, and most importantly, complexity. In the following two vignettes, I will offer narratives tied to context of the interconnectedness of fieldwork, personal reflection, collective meaning-making, place, culture, and curriculum. These are intended to offer glimpses into and the complexities that exist within early childhood education for sustainability settings, and young children’s learning within.

Culture

For one twenty-four-hour period each year after the dark moon of the vernal equinox, the island of Bali exhales and finds rhythm with only the sound of waves lapping against its shores. Each March the motorbikes, garbage burning, gamelan music, and temple processions that inhabit the streets are replaced with silence as locals and travelers alike stay inside for rest and engage in a formal process of reflection. The Hindu ceremony of Nyepi, or “The Day of Silence” accompanies Balinese New Year. The overarching guidelines require peacefully implementing “*Catur Bratha Penyepian*, which consists of: *Amati Karya* (not working), *Amati Gni* (not light[ing] a fire), *Amati Lelungan* (not traveling) and *Amati Lelanguan* (not having fun/entertainment)” (Narottama, 2016, p. 15). Island-wide displays of self-control and contemplation, the Balinese Hindu community believes, will re-focus human purification, provide reprieve from environmental strain, and promote a further closeness to the supreme Hindu God, Hyang Widi Wasa. This is a day where the sun rises and sets in a world seemingly uninhabited by millions trekking across the island’s beaches, roads, airways; frozen in time, drenched in stillness, if only for a moment.

“In accordance with the decision of PHDI (Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia - the highest assembly of Hindus in Indonesia)” (Narottama, 2016, p. 15) Nyepi was formally adopted by the Balinese public in the late 1900s as a national holiday to revitalize Balinese Hindu culture on an

overly-tourism influenced island. One of the central ceremonies during the six-day long ritual period surrounding New Year is the Ngrupuk Parade where communities build and display large demon-like effigies (Ogoh-Ogoh) symbolizing “*Bhuta Kala / negative energy*” (Narottama, 2016, p. 15). The Ogoh-Ogohs are often constructed to represent critiques of current societal ailments and public issues before being purified and burned to the ground after the parade. In the months preceding Nyepi, a massive Ogoh-Ogoh is built by each banjar (neighbourhood) on the island and paraded in competition with the greater community. Each banjar’s unique Ogoh-Ogoh requires group consultation, design and construction, inspiring creativity and simultaneous competition and connection to the individual city communities and larger island community as a whole. Balinese Hinduism, which blends Hinduism and Indigenous animistic beliefs, dominates over 80% of all religious beliefs on the island. All locals and visitors are required to observe the day of the new year, save small village populations of Bali Aga or Bali Mula (Indigenous Balinese) residing in the mountainous northeastern geography of the island. The Island of the Gods simmers with excited and dutiful anticipation from months of preparation leading to one of the largest celebrations of the year.

This energy flows into the culture and curriculum at Green School. Each classroom from the three-year-old Geckos to the Grade 12 Seniors takes part in designing and building a thematic Ogoh-Ogoh to be paraded around the field at Green School, and for the older years, the surrounding neighbourhood of Banjar Saren in the village of Sibang Kaja outside of Green School. As outlined in the Early Years curriculum:

One of the vital aspects of Green School is its location. Nestled in the jungle of Bali, Green School focuses its emphasis on learning locally to make a change for the better...Added to this is the unique Balinese culture. Green School embraces the ceremonies and festivals...We have clear expectations on our community to be connected and attend ceremonies out of respect rather than belief. Key festivals each year for Green School are Saraswati, Nyepi, Galungan as well as experiential opportunities. These experiences connect the population to the land and its heritage. We learn to respect and appreciate the diversity of ageless society. (Green School, 2016, p. 4)

To me, and many other newcomers to Green School, I felt that my enchantment and curiosity with the holiday’s celebration were welcome by locals when I would ask questions about the upcoming ceremony (“You need to go to Denpasar – that is where the biggest Ogoh-Ogohs are – they are as tall as buildings”), or inquire what made their banjar’s Ogoh-Ogoh stand above the rest (“Ours has seven heads!”). Over the course of two months I observed dozens of neighboring

banjars create the frames, bones, and bodies, and fine-tune the mechanics of towering demon Ogoh-Ogohs layer by layer with each passing on motorbike. Towering above the community centers of the banjars were wide eyes, snarled hair, shining teeth, long finger and toe nails, extended tongues. Bell-shaped bronze chimes were pounded with mallets in rapid succession creating tremendous accompaniment to the effigies as they rose higher into the air each day. Making the Ogoh-Ogohs and anticipating the Ngrupuk Parade was an all-encompassing crescendo for those of us – local and visitors - fortunate enough to reside on this exact island in this exact country in this exact moment of time.

To the Balinese teachers, the build-up of the celebration before Nyepi was not far from the celebration that occurs on a normal basis; the daily offerings, the temple processions, the holidays and observances happening multiple times a month. The lead teacher in the Geckos classroom, Ibu Kadek, and the teaching aid both grew up in the banjar (Sibang Kaja) where the school was built in 2008. The assistant teacher was from the neighboring island of Java but had worked at Green School in the Early Years Program since its inaugural year. Celebrating Nyepi, while indeed all-encompassing to the island's inhabitants, seemed almost happily commonplace in the classroom. Just as the concept of nature was embraced and normalized at Green School, so too were the cultural celebrations of the place where we were all learning.

The multi-week-long series of events leading up to Nyepi happened through the formal curriculum, throughout the physical setting of the campus, and ran as a unifying current through the local and international population at Green School. I watched preparations for one of the largest celebrations of the year unfold over a period of eight weeks; from my first official day in the classroom on January 30 to the day before Nyepi - Tuesday, March 28. This celebration marked my insertion to the island, to the school, and to the Geckos classroom. It felt fitting that my introduction to large community ceremony would be with the three and four year-old students – many of whom were also congregating with others in the class, for the first time, in their new home of Bali.

The events related to Nyepi within the Geckos class flowed through each day and through my fieldnotes like an unbroken stream for weeks on end:

- Ibu Kadek and Ibu Pipit describe Nyepi with the Geckos during circle time (*before fieldwork began*)
- Everyone (including teachers) draws their own version of an Ogoh-Ogoh with colored pencils and oil pastels. Ibu Kadek explains the voting process; we will choose 1 picture to

represent our classroom and then we will construct that Ogoh Ogoh. We collectively vote with colored pencils; each Gecko places their pencil on the Ogoh-Ogoh they like the best. After each vote, the image with the least amount of pencils gets taken away. All Geckos comment happily when their friends Ogoh-Ogoh remains; surprisingly, no one is outwardly upset when their Ogoh-Ogoh is not chosen. The last image chosen was my drawing of a short “Rambutan Monster.” I explained that I chose to draw a Rambutan Monster because I had just learned about Rambutan; with its red hairy exterior, it is a fruit that does not grow where I live in Canada and was a fruit I saw almost every student in the Geckos class had during lunchtimes.

- A local man from Sibang Kaja, Pak Widi, comes into the classroom and discusses helping build the Rambutan Monster (now nicknamed “Ramon the Rambutan Monster” by Ibu Pipit and two Geckos). The Ogoh-Ogoh will be constructed out of woven chicken and rooster cages. Ibu Kadek discusses the materials we can use: chicken cages, wire or thread, newspaper, glue, and items from Kembali (Green School’s recycling center). She also says that we can cover Ramon in the hairy peel of the Rambutan fruit.
- For weeks, we collect “skin” for Ramon during snack and lunch time. Geckos know to keep the peel of their rambutans in a basket by the short bamboo lunch table outside of the classroom. The Geckos are used to “collecting” items; they had been saving and sorting seeds (cucumber, orange, rambutan, snake fruit, apple) in an egg carton for a planting project weeks before I arrived.
- One Gecko bites into rambutan seed during snack time and shows me: “I just bit it to look inside – it is white and a little red. Tastes like a stone.”
- Another Gecko shows me another Rambutan seed: “Ibu Annie – seed from my house. Bali.”
- A different Gecko let me know he was done with snack:
EN: “I’m done Ibu Annie.”
Annie: “Ok...you can put everything in the compost.”
EN: “No – this [rambutan] is for Ogoh-Ogoh, and seeds [rambutan] for our garden.”
- We sit on the floor of the Geckos classroom with piles of newsprint. Ibu Kadek demonstrates how to rip the large sheets of paper into the smaller pieces and explains that we will use them to cover the chicken cages before we glue the rambutan peels onto it. The Geckos rip newspaper into various sized strips, clumps, and shreds.
- After the teachers glue on the pieces of newspaper and let dry (after school), and after we collect and dry enough Rambutan peels, the teachers and Geckos begin gluing them onto Ramon with wooden popsicle sticks and jars of paste. The twists and turns of the dried fruit peel often teste the Geckos patience; falling in gluey globs to the floor after being stuck momentarily to the Ogoh-Ogoh’s paper-covered body. Some students leave to dance around the classroom or to lay down on the grass-matt covered cement floor. Some stay to navigate the curves of the peels around Ramon’s round belly.
- Once a week, Ibu Krisna, the specialty Bahasa (language) teacher for the Early Years Program, infuses language and culture lessons surrounding Nyepi into the EYP with puppet-

narrated stories and videos on the projector of Ogoh-Ogohs and gamelan music that accompanies the parades. One Gecko recognizes a particular YouTube video clip and yells excitedly; “I know this! It’s the Ogoh-Ogoh song!” and sings along. The student continues to sing the song during free play, or during activities, over the following weeks – and past the actual celebration of Nyepi.

- Using upcycled plastic spray bottles from old cleaning supplies, we paint Ramon with watered-down red paint. All the Geckos wear protective smocks (upcycled long-sleeved adult-sized shirts worn backwards over their bodies) and are given a spray bottle to drench Ramon’s body in color.
- The following week, Ibu Kadek dresses Ramon for ceremony; she wraps his lower half with traditional black and white checked Kamben (sarong) fabric and creates an Udeng (traditional Balinese headband) for him. She inserts wide paper eyes into his face, and shining teeth, painted white, into his mouth.
- During circle time, Ibu Kadek explains how we will be taking part in a school-wide celebration; we will get to show the rest of the school Ramon during a parade on the field. This, she explains, happens in almost every banjar in Bali. Because we have neighbourhoods in Green School (Early Years, Primary, Middle and High School), and because Green School is part of Bali, we will all get to participate in the parade. As a group, we practice “lifting, carrying, and putting-down” by balancing a stuffed animal on a long fabric mat. Each Gecko picks up their piece of mat and begins to dance to gamelan music playing on the speakers.
- Over the course of two weeks, the teachers ask parents to bring in a red tee-shirt that we can decorate and wear for the parade. Many parents bring in old red tees from other siblings or from their Gecko’s existing wardrobe – some have purchased them from Kembali. We paint our red shirts with green and black paint, using doilies as stencils. When they are dry, the teaching assistant paints the names of the Geckos and teachers onto each shirt so the entire classroom is represented on the fabric.
- During these final weeks, preparations are happening around the school. As they are being finalized, each classroom’s Ogoh-Ogohs are placed semi-out in the open (because there are no solid walls of the bamboo classrooms). Sibang Kaja and every banjar is preparing their own Ogoh-Ogohs, some up to three stories tall, and practicing gamelan – visible and audible on all roads to and from school.
- During parent-teacher conferences taking place during preparations, one Gecko’s mother describes to us that her child (who had moved from South Korea six months before and had a hard transition to Bali) was cheerfully talking about and dancing with pretend Ogoh-Ogohs at home.
- The morning of the parade, Ibu Kadek and Ibu Pipit bring in real rambutan to string with yarn into a necklace. Each Gecko picks a rambutan and are helped with attaching the string. Like a candy necklace, the temptation to eat the white inner flesh, or poke at the hairy fruit when hanging from their necks, is high. Yet only a few eat their necklaces before the parade. Each Gecko wears their red shirts, their Udeng, a Kamben, and a sash around their waists. In our ceremony clothes representing the Geckos class, the Geckos, teachers, and a few

parents carry Ramon on his new bamboo platform through the dirt paths of the Early Years neighbourhood and up dozens of long stone steps to the Heart of School. Here, Ramon would be judged by the head of school with the rest of the school's classrooms' Ogoh-Ogohs.

- The entire school (students, teachers, assistants, operations team, storefront workers, parents) meets on the field with their classroom's Ogoh-Ogohs. On a microphone attached to an amplifier, Ibu Suci announces each classroom and their Ogoh-Ogoh before taking turns to parade their creation around the field for the length of a few minutes. Some of the classes have created their own song and dance to go along with their Ogoh-Ogoh theme (all of which reflect Green School's values environmentally-oriented foci: i.e. "The Four Elements", "Tokei" (Gecko), "Bumble Bee", and so on.) The upper years carry their Ogoh-Ogohs to the streets of Sibang Kaja and parade them around the neighboring village across the river.
- Some of the little Geckos stumble and trip; some wander away to their parents in the front of the crowd, two became scared by the loud music; but most continue to grip to Ramon's bamboo platform tight and parade their creation in front of the school. After the parade, the school gathers in the Singkep (the Sumatran-architecture inspired assembly hall) to announce the winners and distribute woven banana leaf badges. Ramon, the Rambutan Monster, wins second place for the overarching school-wide category of "Friend of the Earth." One Gecko volunteers to go up to the front of the assembly hall and collects the badge, beaming.

After the parade and assembly, the parents and students partake in the normal after-school activities; buying baked and raw treats from one of the four businesses located near the front of school, purchasing coconut water and fresh pressed juice or jamu (traditional drink made from honey, lime, and turmeric), mingling with parents and teachers, listening and dancing to music radiating from the Singkep (assembly hall), weaving through laughter and packs of people gathering their friends and families to disburse out of the jungle for an extended break from school.

Later that night, Bali shines with light; each main street of each banjar illuminated with street lights, spotlights, and torches. I travel five minutes from Green School to the main street of Sibang Kaja, the banjar territory in which Green School resides, with my friends - a group of Green School interns from different islands in Indonesia – to experience this uniquely Balinese night. Young women wrapped in lace and gold and ikat with tall shining headpieces and bold makeup walk holding posts with the name of their banjar; dancers dressed as long-haired demons and angry gods leap, snarl, lunge at each other and the massive crowd lining the street; men pound on their kendhang (two-sided drum) to synchronize the beat while the percussive gamelan strike in rapid, interlocking layers. We stand amidst an unending river of metal, flash, and fire. I spot a family from the Starlings class with their two young daughters on the side of the road; curled in their mother's

lap, staring in awe at the uproar. Somewhere, someone narrates each individual story of the Ogoh-Ogohs and their birth to existence in Bahasa on a loud speaker; interlayering them with Balinese Hinduism folklore. Over the heads of the crowds the Ogoh-Ogohs begin to tower down the street. Men in their banjar's colors wear matching Kamben and Udeng as they lift and tilt the bamboo platforms; shaking their story-high demons; making them come alive. Banjar after banjar parades their creations through the night, until pre-dawn when the effigies are burned as symbolic cleansing entering the new year.

Stillness blankets the island for twenty-four hours after the blazing energetic fire of celebration fades into wisps of smoke. Breezes blow through remains of the night before. Only stray dogs wander the streets and humming birds travel to blossoms. Contemplation and reverence extinguish the ills of society and the hedonistic existence of humankind. Breathing slows for all life on the island. As darkness approaches, stars replace torches, the moon replaces street lamps. Our cosmos glitters with reverberating darkness as its backdrop. Waves embrace the island. The milky way laps against its shores. If you exhale deep enough, your silhouette, which rests in shadows with the palm trees and sand and warungs and temples and motorbikes and plastic water bottles and tourists and locals and worries and possibilities, is released into the depths of the sky, and the gratitude of the moment. And when you blink your eyes open to greet the sun the next morning; life goes on as before, anticipating the next celebration of existence and light.

Two weeks passed after Nyepi without school programming. Students traveled to neighbouring islands or different countries, some spent time at home. When we returned from the long break, the experience of building the Ogoh-Ogoh, the Ngrupuk Parade, and Nyepi were still infused in the psyches of the Geckos. This was apparent through the stories they told each other during lunch (of recounting the Ogoh-Ogohs they saw with their families) and during playtime. P, when cleaning up the dress-up area, held a small pop-up tent above his head and looked over at me: "Tbu Annie! Ogoh-Ogoh!"

I was surprised that after so much time had passed, the Ngrupuk Parade and the Ogoh-Ogohs still seemed like buzzing current running through the conversations and actions of the students. During lunchtime, three Geckos noticed a line of ants under the table (which occurred almost daily). However, this time, their conversation changed from telling each other to lift up their feet or commenting on the number of ants to what the ants were actually doing:

NV: "Look! The ants are carrying a seed!"

EN: "It's a seed Ogoh-Ogoh!"

NV: “The ants are saying ‘seed seed Ogoh-Ogoh seed seed Ogoh-Ogoh’ [mimicking a song from the YouTube clip shown in Ibu Krisna’s class 5 weeks prior]

Annie: “Are the ants carrying the Ogoh-Ogoh?”

NV and E: Both nod yes without taking their eyes off the ants.

The experience of creating the Ogoh-Ogoh had permeated their realities; their perceptions of the world around them, their memories, their narratives, their actions, their play. During our weekly walk to the field area for gym, we walked past Ramon the Rambutan Monster that was being held with the rest of Green School’s (unburned) Ogoh-Ogohs in the Heart of School. Nearly all of the little Geckos squealed and shrieked when they saw Ramon; losing flip flops on their short run to hug the base of his round body; reuniting with a friend after weeks apart.

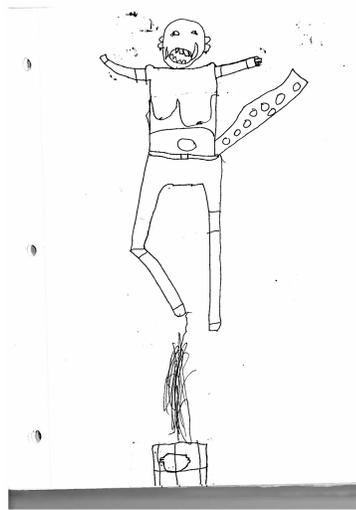


Figure 3.6: Ogoh-Ogoh, drawn by G, Kindy Class, February 2017

The learning outcomes from curricular or naturally arising experiences in the Early Years Program leading up to the Ngrupuk Parade and Nyepi carried significance for the Geckos. Students were practicing democratic processes within their community (voting on which Ogoh-Ogoh picture to build), being introduced to collaboration with a local community member (Pak Widi), learning to re-use or upcycle physical and found materials for projects (experimenting with sustainable resources to build their Ogoh-Ogoh such as chicken cages and rambutan skins), and practicing persistent teamwork towards an end goal (carrying the finished Ogoh-Ogoh during the parade). Students were becoming familiarized with common music (i.e. gamelan) and traditions (constructing the Ogoh-Ogohs) frequently seen outside of the Green School campus but were being introduced to them in

the sheltered and safe learning space of the Early Years Program neighbourhood. In the greatest sense, they were taking part in and contributing to a larger school-wide and island-wide cultural celebration that linked everyone together.

When it comes to the field of ECEfS, and educational settings such as the one in which Green School resides, multicultural education and environmental/sustainability education are inextricable. Both tap into “historical aspects of difference and diversity, as much as with the increasingly complex contemporary aspects of diversity” (Gundara & Portera, 2008, p. 465). In an article titled “Environmental Education and Multicultural Education – Too Close to Be Separate?” Finnish scholar Hanna Kaisa Nordström explains:

Environmental education and multicultural education also find common ground in treasuring diversity, respect and compassion...The relationship between these two educational trends should be seen in a wider context, as a starting point for more holistic teaching and learning. Environmental education and multicultural education can be considered as two parts of the same theme of how individuals and institutions can collaborate in building a better, sustainable world locally, nationally and globally. (Nordström, 2008, p. 131)

Professor Patricia Ramsey, who studies early social and attitudinal development, has conducted a wide-ranging review of literature that explores young children’s understanding of their complex surroundings, especially in multicultural contexts. Focusing on multicultural education, Ramsey notes that this field has the capacity of “broadening children’s perspectives so that they learn to recognize, respect, and appreciate commonalities and differences among people in their communities, country, and the world and develop a sense of solidarity with all people and with the natural world” (Ramsey 2009, p. 227). She details that the field of early childhood education has taken up the principles of multicultural education (such as practicing inclusivity and understanding diversity) for a number of reasons reflected in extensive research since the mid-1950s. One of these reasons is to help combat the tendency for children who can easily absorb racially prejudiced views, another is to help children develop close relationships with families and communities. She goes on to explain that this is important because “young children also tend to organize information in broad categories that are often rigid and dichotomous and often see extremes rather than gradations....as a result, they often make sweeping assumptions that reflect the social, political, and economic histories in their respective communities and countries” (Ramsey 2009, p.223). Multicultural educators believe that with quality educational programming, children will learn to see their social and natural world with more complexity and understanding – and move beyond simply “adding ethnic content to the curriculum” (Nieto, xi, 2014). Based on my review of literature, perhaps it is time environmental

educators in the field of ECEfS will take note of the complementary pairing between environmental education and multicultural education in international early learning contexts. Both disciplines take into account the interrelated social, economic, and political realities of groups of people inhabiting, and perhaps shaping, one collective environment.

Even with these two fields complementary modes of operating however, I wondered throughout the entirety of fieldwork how much I (and other international visitors to the island) were taking the flash and glitter of the Nyepi celebration at face value: were we oversimplifying Balinese culture? Each classroom observation and personal reflection surrounding Nyepi, specifically, brought up questions around how much the perpetuation of this one event may be shaping a narrow view of the cultural landscape we were collectively inhabiting. Essentialism is defined as a process where

certain characteristics become naturalized and normalized representations of groups, defining and fixing who and what they are; it is also the tendency to see one aspect of a subject's identity (often the visible parts) and make that representative of the whole individual... This knowledge is largely constituted within cultural binaries that result in oppositional or "dualistic thinking" and therefore perpetuates cultural power relations that are "constituted in and maintained through these binary relationships, based on hierarchies of power. (Robinson & Joan-Diaz, 2005, p. 4)

Tourists, Bali's main economic import, often exoticize the island and their experiences within it; and the tourism industry sells those images right back. Being cognizant of this trend possibly being reflected in the educational landscape, how might this representation of a cultural holiday be affecting young learners? Is the Early Years Program providing numerous experiential learning opportunities to integrate culture into their programming, thoughtfully embracing local culture and multiculturalism within place, as mentioned above? Or is Green School taking part in a 'tourist curricula' approach to education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010)?

According to multicultural education scholars, the often-harmful habit of introducing 'culture' in fragmented short-term activities has been well established in early childhood educational settings in North America. Much of the literature I found on the topic of tourist-based cultural education in early childhood addressed teachers and schools in north American settings that target educators who produce short-term curricular activities "that "drops in" on strange, exotic people to see their holidays and taste their foods, and then returns to the "real" world of "regular" life... [which is] shaped by the cultural norms, rules of behavior, images, and teaching and learning styles" of dominant groups (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p. 7). Melinda Miller, ECEfS scholar focusing on reconciliation education in Australia, also notes the trend of educators' over-simplified

perceptions of groups of people can even carry over into programs with an overarching active focus on inclusion and imbedding Indigenous perspectives in their ongoing school programming. In her widely published doctoral research, Miller (2014; 2017) details two ECE programs in Australia aiming to foster transformative diversity education around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages with their youngest students. When describing one teacher (Gail) Miller notes that “Gail’s ideas relied on ‘safe’ or ‘acceptable’ constructions of Indigenous cultures. As her ideas made use of cultural icons (i.e., boomerangs, dot paintings) embraced freely within broader society, she could maintain control over how Indigenous cultures were represented within the classroom space without scrutiny or critique” (Miller 2017, p. 40). Therefore, “Rather than reporting examples of ‘good practice’, the study identified how racism and whiteness continued to operate in the educators’ work around culture and diversity even when their practices were seen to be outwardly productive and inclusive” (Miller, 2014, p. 64).

Even with a growing critical awareness of these issues in practice, the tendency for ECE educators to perpetuate cycles of cultural oversimplification is still there, often built into how curriculum has been and often still is typically executed in ECE settings: “Because early childhood curriculum is built largely on stories, arts and crafts, and music, it was particularly easy for the initial multicultural efforts to focus on holidays, foods, crafts, and music of disparate cultures – often inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes and ‘exoticising’ others” (Ramsey 2009, p. 225). Furthermore, as detailed in Miller’s (2014; 2017) research, educators often lack critical reflection around their own positions in complex settings: “Non-Indigenous educators may also mobilise resistance to self-analysis in relation to culture and identity because this work can be discomfiting and is rarely enforced on those who identify as members of a mainstream group” (MacNaughton & Davis 2009; Phillips 2011, 2012 in Miller 2017, p. 38). Teacher’s lack of critical self-analysis may also be in part due to frequent undertraining in ECE centers and schools, as well as lack of quality and targeted professional development opportunities once employed. Because one of the primary challenges in fostering successful multicultural programs is children’s guardedness with unfamiliarity (including languages, appearances, and behaviors) (MacNaughton & Davis, 2009), even cultural activities that are “done respectfully” often fall short when young students can’t connect what is being introduced to the context of their own lives (Ramsey, 2009).

While much of the literature on multicultural ECE is focused on recommendations for western-dominated schools with western teachers, international schools (such as Green School) that choose to exist in cultural settings different from that of their majority student body also have a

specific responsibility to examine the complexity of their cultural settings and how this is infused into their programming. Negative side effects of multicultural education (such as ‘tourist-curricula’) are being challenged by programming that incorporates contextualized experiences that are part of the ongoing, routine learning environment (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). The whole-school or whole-center approach is one way in which students, teachers, and administrators are able to interact with cultural diversity on a large-scale; something that Green School focuses on in every level of their programming, beginning with the Early Years Program. The whole-school approach goes beyond one-off drop-in cultural activities and instead often involves “positive staff-pupil relationships; staff development and education; teamwork; the active involvement of parents, the local community and key local agencies; starting the approach early with the youngest children; and having a long-term commitment to the programme” (Weare, 2000, p. 35) throughout every level of the institution. The whole-school and whole-community approach to incorporating culture at Green School and in the Early Years Program is supported by the Geckos teachers Ibu Kadek and Ibu Pipit:

Annie: And you think that it’s overall a good thing that the Green-- how the Green School is approaching integrating the culture into the school is a good thing?

Ibu Kadek: Yeah, because everyone comes from different countries. And it’s really important to bring in their culture also and to introduce them the local culture and I think it’s a good thing.

Ibu Pipit: Yeah. And the thing about Indonesia - and this is something that we actually should be proud and celebrate of - we are very different. So, we have bunch of religions, we have bunch of ethnics, we have a bunch of languages. All of the Indonesians here, we have a different religion, we have a different background, we master different languages. Like Ibu Kadek can speak Balinese and Ibu Suci speak Javanese. Something that’s at least one person, even though Indonesian, they can speak three languages. I mean, it’s really rich. And being an international school in Bali, if you-- I mean, not just in Bali, in Indonesia, if you don’t celebrate that, it’s a lose really. And we are actually really, really proud with the fact that Green School actually celebrates that. We celebrates everything [laughter]. Everything is like a celebration.

Ibu Kadek: Yeah, everything.

Ibu Pipit: And especially living in Bali where there's a lot of celebration and ceremonies. And we have actually more holidays than any other countries in the world. And in Bali, we have more holidays than any other place in Indonesia. Because we really is living in a celebration mode of lots of things. Either it's the religious reason or cultural reason. And for the school to introduce that to the students, to introduce all of this diversity, that peoples are different but you can

actually live together, there's to nurture tolerance and things like that, it's very, very important for our future generation. You will find it really, really different if Green School is in Singapore, for example. We're not going to celebrate all of this thing. There will be no Ogoh-Ogoh parade, there will be no Banjar making. There will be no all of this celebration that we celebrate here, like lots of things. (Ibu Pipit & Ibu Kadek, personal interview, April 12, 2017)

Green School may be miles ahead when integrating local culture into their programming compared to other international schools worldwide. However, exposure to and immersion in different cultures, such as Balinese Hinduism, however, is not enough. The importance of partaking in sustained cultural activities, such as Nyepi, falls flat if the experiences are merely 'experiences' without any context beyond the acknowledgment of local culture. Ramsey (2009) notes that in order to form deeper connections of cultural understanding is to also "emphasize that similarities and differences are continua, not polarities, and that we all share a combination of common and unique traits and experiences" (p. 229). Green School welcomes families and educators from dozens of international countries, and embraces Bali's dominant culture, holidays, and daily traditions as the river that connects the streams into a dynamic whole. The Early Years Program, predominantly headed by Indonesian teachers who focus on the cultural and natural environment of Bali, emphasizes connections among all people by providing daily examples of "how we all live on the same planet, breathe the same air, drink the same water, and share an interest in conserving our resources" (Ramsey 2009, p. 229). The sustained activities that transcended the individual confines of curriculum, culture and physical setting surrounding celebrating Nyepi created a consistent connection to young learner's lives and everyday exposure to Balinese culture, and place in its larger sense.

Even with the challenges that come with understanding culture in diverse settings and incorporating it into classroom settings, it is important to continue to critically examine this concept in ECEfS. When approaching multicultural education and local beliefs in early childhood education for sustainability, Miller (2014) suggests leaning into the complexities this task holds:

A clearer focus on intercultural dialogues in ECEfS presents an opportunity to explore connections between environmental issues and intersections of culture, 'race' and ethnicity. This is both in terms of an inward look at one's own... related cultural positioning, and an outward look at the standpoints and perspectives of individuals and various cultural groups. Intercultural dialogues extend beyond celebration of differences and the co-existence of different groups in societies (Gundara and Portera 2011)...[and] promote strategies for thinking critically about relations between different groups. This includes how power and the distribution of

resources between different groups are bound by historical circumstances which influence the present... For people in mainstream cultures, it is particularly vital to actively question what informs their worldview and what is silenced in the stories and histories they attend to in the present. (p. 65)

On an island where celebration occurs daily, gratitude flows in streams of incense from dawn until dusk, and *canang sari* (daily offerings) bless the entrances and exits to all doors, the blending of culture and environment are woven into the fabric of everyday life, and everyday curriculum and practice at Green School. If ECEfS truly aims to be the “enactment of transformative, empowering and participative education around sustainability issues” (Davis, 2014, p. 22), the field must embrace the critical examination of people and programming within their contexts – “natural environment” and “cultural environment” alike.

The Geckos celebration of Nyepi shows that the type of sustained celebration of culture facilitated and planned by local Indonesian teachers in the Early Years Program embraced the perpetual celebrations of the Balinese Hindu community, supported inclusive participation for visitors of the island to acknowledge and participate in the large cultural experiences already taking place in Bali, and most importantly, created an atmosphere that seamlessly connected positive multicultural learning experiences to tangible life experiences with their young learners. Furthering these “intercultural dialogues” within the field of ECEfS is crucial if we are to understand and expand sustainability education into realms of greater efficacy through complexity. Indeed, “in recent years, numerous authors have commented on the need for a clearer focus on how environmental and cultural dimensions of sustainability interrelate and impact each other” (Davis & Elliott, 2014, p. 65) and that “strategies of environmental education need to be tailored to the cultural context” (Nordström, 2008, p. 134). Practicing sustainability education in cultural contexts “align[s] with primary goals of sustainability, particularly in terms of social sustainability and ways to build reciprocity in relations between different groups” (Miller, 2014, p. 70).

However, continuous attending to what is ‘accepted’ culturally (i.e. celebrating Nyepi through culture, curriculum, and setting) does not necessarily require a conceptual shift (Miller, 2017) in continuous rigorous examination into the layers of place and programming - nor steadfast reexamination of better understanding the educational landscape we are creating and are already enmeshed within. Indeed, it rings true that “in colonizing contexts...education is a key social institution that upholds and reproduces white (western) institutional arrangements and knowledge traditions” (Miller, 2017, p. 36). This is why it is important schools, school programs, classrooms, and the field of ECEfS continue to critically reflect on what values they are upholding and how

when incorporating multicultural education into early learning contexts for sustainability. Focus around the complexity of connection – not only how connections can foster growth and good, but how the dynamic landscapes where education “happens” can challenge these intentions - challenge how educational programs conceptualize and enact forming connections, and for what purpose.

Curriculum

She almost whispered when she talked between her lips that rarely stopped smiling. Ibu Suci Ratri, a Javanese woman in her mid 40s, had been appointed head of the Early Years Program by a former Head of School for seven years – taking over the program only two years after the school itself was founded. With a bachelor’s degree in Education, years of experience teaching kindergarten, and former principal at a high-profile school in Jakarta for three years, Ibu Suci relocated to teach preschool at Green School before being promoted to Head of the Early Years Program. During the duration of her time as head of the program, she witnessed many iterations of Green School trying to define itself; though shifting administrations, board members, educators, families, ebbs and flows of enrollment, and the expectations of “how Green School should be” that each group brought with them. When Ibu Suci left her position to move back to Java to open her own nature-based school at the end of the 2017 schoolyear, she was one of the few who had been there from the start. Throughout the constant change within the institution, Ibu Suci remained, quietly shaping the Early Years Program and the teachers within it.

Out of the four ‘neighbourhoods’ within the school (Early Years, Primary, Middle and High School) The Early Years Program was an anomaly as far as teaching teams. Every single teacher and support staff, except for one lead teacher and the specialty music/Green Studies teacher, were Indonesian. Eleven out of the thirteen faculty (employed by the Early Years Program) and classroom support staff (employed through the Green School’s Operations Department) were Indonesian. Not only were the faculty Indonesian, they held positions within the EYP that other programs in the school did not; lead teachers and administrators.

Through the years Ibu Suci and Green School worked to provide the Indonesian teaching team growth within the EYP by supporting assistant teachers to go back to school to study education. Ibu Kadek, the current lead teacher in the Geckos class was able to obtain a teaching certificate from a local university (Udayana Universitas) after beginning her role as an assistant teacher in the Early Years Program. Ibu Pipit, the assistant teacher in the Geckos classroom who

had worked at Green School since the first year the Early Years Program began in 2008, graduated with a Bachelor of Education from a local university (Universitas Mahasaraswati) at the end of 2017.

The school actually...gives us lots of opportunity to enhance our skill and background. They give us lots of joining the development program and they keep on asking us, “What kind of training that you need? What kind of training that you want?” And so they will try to provide it for us. And we can-- if we can give them, “Oh, I really want to do this,” they can approve it if they want it, if they want to, and if we really have time for it. So the school, in a way, is very supportive of us expanding our knowledge and skills. (Ibu Pipit, personal interview, April 12, 2017)

Another assistant teacher in the Starlings classroom was working full time at Green School while also enrolled fulltime at Ngura Rai University completing her Master’s degree in ECE – conducting research regarding politeness strategies of native English speakers within her current preschool classroom. Through formal and informal interviews, teachers expressed that the opportunity to expand one’s education was a possibility while working at Green School. One young support staff who worked in the Kindergarten classroom told me her dream is to become a lead teacher in the Early Years program after she completes school.

Ibu Suci not only supported teacher education opportunities, she fought for the legitimization of their positions as lead teachers and opportunities for advancement within the Early Years Program. This effort was bolstered by – or perhaps only available because of - the fact that during the academic year of 2016-2017, during my fieldwork, the Early Years Program was in the process of becoming accredited by the Badan Akreditasi Nasional (National Accreditation Body of Indonesia). In order for the EYP to be accredited, the ratio of teachers in the program needed to be at least 70% Indonesian, and no more than 30% foreigner. It is my understanding that Ibu Suci received a lot of push-back from parents about having an Indonesian-dominated teaching team; indeed, it was her impression from years of teaching as well, that led her to believe that parents wanted international teachers – specifically teachers who had been western trained, and, most importantly, spoke English as a first language.

Indeed, my presence as another international person in the program was a powerful one in the Early Years Program it seemed. I recall my first month observing the classrooms of the program:

A new student arrived from Germany this week; his mother accompanied him into the room. After the Geckos teachers greeted him and his mother, I introduced myself as a visiting researcher who was going to be observing the EYP for a few months in the classrooms. It was an enthusiastic and warm exchange. [Over the following week] she arrived in the classroom and proceeded to hand me her son’s

sunscreen – “This isn’t being put on him, can you be in charge of making sure this gets put on?” – and, when drop-off times were especially trying, she calms him by saying, “Go on, Ibu Annie is here.” [Over the following weeks] through informal conversations, she implied that she valued me in the classroom as someone “who was familiar” and was a native English speaker. (Personal Reflection, February 2017)

I can understand how the mother might have felt. Moving across the globe to Indonesia with two young children would spark some insecurities with unfamiliarity. She wanted her children to begin to learn English and I was a native speaker. My skin and my light hair were comparable to her and her child’s. My life in North America was potentially more similar to the one she led in Germany than the one we were both currently leading in Bali. I may also have been just a person that her son connected with regardless of these similarities. The behavior of relying heavily on international teachers was mirrored by many (not all) parents. The two American teachers (a seasoned Early Years Program teacher who had lived in Bali and taught in the Early Years Program for 6 years and was the lead teacher in the Starlings classroom, and a young male teacher who had bounced around from position to position in the school teaching “Green Studies” and music) sometimes acted as the parent’s sounding boards for suggestions and concerns before they voiced the same concerns to their Indonesian counterparts.

As a newer initiative to counteract some of the parent/teacher divide, during the beginning of the new academic year each Learning Neighbourhood hosts an informational session with new members of the Green School community to familiarize them with their surroundings. According to Ibu Suci, this has improved relationships between families and the staff:

Because we also teach them-- so as you see, at the beginning of every new school year, we have like a training not just for the teachers, the new teachers about cultural, about value, but also for the parents. So that’s also-- the way we educate them about local value.... When it comes about Indonesian as a leader, they are more polite. Not like used to be-- but maybe if I’m not Indonesian, I’m American, maybe they still can like arguing, so yeah [laughter]. Like hard, but they don’t do that to me. And teachers, Indonesian teachers, different than before. (Ibu Suci, personal interview, April 10, 2017)

With each new wave of parents moving to Bali wanting an immersive Indonesian-but-not-too-Indonesian educational experience for their young children, this type of favoritism parents displayed towards international teachers seemed to solidify a pervasive mindset within streams of people in the school that international teachers are valued more; and therefore, locals are lacking. One might argue that this mindset was offset by the school’s efforts to equalize this mentality. For

example, the school emphasizes place-based learning by firmly situating their mission statements within many communities:

Green School absorbs and respects the rich culture and customs of this island which is known for its inspirational creativity... The diversity within our community is a pouring fountain of multicultural benefits; from the variety of languages, beliefs and traditions to the wide range of values, principles and identities... We are gifted with constant exposure to new ways of going about life that nourish our tolerance, broaden our perspectives and feed our global intelligence. (Green School, 2016; 2018c)

Beyond these broad statements, Green School incorporates the governmental-mandated Bahasa (language) and Budaya (culture) classes in every level of their classrooms. Green School operates on the Balinese Calendar, and observes Balinese and major Indonesian holidays within school programming; the school's two largest celebrations each year are Nyepi (the celebration preceding Balinese New Year) and Saraswati Day (Day of Knowledge). The small temple shrines around the campus (that existed pre-development of the school) are maintained by the largely Balinese operations team. Canang Sari (daily offerings) and incense bless the entrance to classrooms, buildings, bridges and paths that connect them each morning. The international/local divide amongst faculty and staff was also breached by the participation of all faculty in school-wide activities and extracurricular activities such as weekly yoga and exercise classes. Steering committees of major projects and initiatives were comprised of both Indonesian and international teachers and staff alike. For example, the Green Educator Course, which draws K-12 educators from around the world to learn about "the Green School way" for an immersive week of workshops, has support from teachers and the school's operations teams, both local and international. During my fieldwork, I sat in on multiple meetings with the Green Educator Course steering committee who were preparing for the school's first all-Indonesian educator Green Educator Course the following year. All teachers and staff, regardless of nationality, are able to send their children to Green School with waived tuition. All of the teachers I interviewed seemed to genuinely love their jobs and spoke explicitly about feeling valued in the school community, and the greater sustainability-oriented global community the school aims to create.

I really like to think that we are, as Green School, it's very, very lucky and honored to have all of these parents coming from all over the world just to experience this school. And we, as teachers, of course, we feel very honored and there is a huge responsibility to make them learn as much as they can and, of course, happy while they're doing it. (Ibu Pipit, personal interview, April 12, 2017)

Ibu Kadek: Experience with parents. Yeah, there are good and bad, of course, always. Yeah, the good thing is the parents who come here to bring their kids, they must be really having a big dream about this because some of them come here just for the Green School, as you know, just for this school. And then yeah, I'm so proud. I'm so proud to be teaching here at Green School and meeting new people from all over the world. I never imagined this is going to happen in my life. And yeah, the good thing is meeting many people from around the world and then learning about their-- how do you say it? How do you say it [laughter]? Yeah, learning about different kind of-- can you say, maybe, cultures? ... Yeah. It's just good for me and then for me, myself. And also the bad experience is, yeah, like what Ibu Pipit already said. They have their own-- [asks Ibu Pipit a question in Bahasa]? Ibu Pipit: Expectation. (Ibu Kadek, personal interview, April 12, 2017)

Much of the educator's uneasiness surrounding the Indonesian/international divide was perhaps pacified by indeed being paid more than any other Indonesian teaching position on the island – as well as the recognition of teaching at an internationally publicized educational institution. Through information gathered during the formal interviews, the educators' values aligned with the iRespect values of the school; they appreciated the sense of community, of how unique the school is from the rest of Indonesia – how it is the only school that they knew of that incorporates teaching about and practicing sustainability; at large, how the divide between the local community and the international community is small in comparison to other institutions on the island or in southeast Asia. Yet it seems the school, driven by parent demands, undercuts its efforts to prioritize meaningful involvement with locals and their contributions within the greater community by perpetuating mindsets of inequality. One of the ways the school does this systematically is through pay differences between Indonesian and western teachers.

Organizationally, there are two teachers per classroom; one Indonesian, one international in Primary through High School. These two positions combined create what Green School calls a “teaching team”. While labeled a teaching team, most faculty and parents in the school conceptualize the international teacher as the ‘lead’ teacher and the Indonesian teacher is conceptualized as teaching Bahasa (Language) and Budaya (Culture). Some of Green School's international educators in the Primary and Upper years discussed with me that they often would be expected to create and deliver the most curricular content and bear the majority of parent communications - therefore putting the majority of the work on them. When I asked both international and Indonesian teachers in the Primary and Upper years if there were ever any Indonesian lead teachers – they said no. When asked why, they alluded to two concerns: 1) because of parental demand of wanting an English-speaking or western educated teacher in charge and 2) because of pay.

“At times, socially-aware educators are most at risk of incongruence between what they believe, say and do because of a lack of critical reflection on standpoints and pedagogies that align closely with white constructions of inclusivity” (Lampert, 2012 in Miller, 2017, p. 43). Green School justifies the pay gap by relying on a counterintuitive frame of mind (given their emphasis on community and equity) by falling back on the pretext that “this is how international schools [in SE Asia at least] operate.” They justified this by stating that, compared to other international schools and certainly other schools in Bali, they pay their Indonesian teachers more than anybody else. They justified this by saying that, to be competitive for enrollment, parents expect them to have quality international teachers – and to have quality international teachers, they needed to be competitive with international salaries (although all international teachers do take a pay cut to work at Green School compared to other developed countries). They justified this by insinuating that it wouldn’t be “economically sustainable” for the school if they paid all of their teachers a western salary. If they hired a lead Indonesian teacher, this system implied, the precarious and hushed balance of pay would be thrown off – and necessitate an open discussion.

One reason why equitable paying practices were not discussed out in the open was that it seemed Green School did not have a transparent method for differentiating who got paid what amount. Through the information I was able to gather, there is no transparent pay scale with regards to nationality, experience, education, qualification, or personal circumstance – except the consistent reality that international teachers always made between five to ten times more than Indonesian teachers. The fact that these imbalances existed and were not transparent to the teaching community itself created an underlying discontent amongst Indonesian teachers as well as awkwardness felt by the international teachers. With each breach of the topic, I could tell that the teaching body lived enmeshed in contradictions each day in their personal lives and classrooms; teaching about social and eco-justice, teaching about Bali, teaching about expansive thought, teaching about connection – while being paid significantly different amounts than their counterparts to discuss these topics.

In my report for the Head of School at the end of my research internship I addressed this issue as such:

As a school that underlines ethical educational and development practices, Green School has the chance to play a global leadership role for international schools in many ways. This authenticity of leading by example is compromised if the structural financial realities do not match what is being taught. Green School emphasizes and publicizes its high regard and significant respect for the local community and the school’s educators. This laudable ethical stance can be further strengthened through

the practice of transparency and equity with regards to teaching salaries. (Montague, 2017, p. 8)

Although pay difference was never a topic of constant, outward conversation – breaching the discussion gave way to a fragile undercurrent of unspoken inequality within the school. I witnessed an example of this inequality surfacing in the Early Years Program happened during my last few weeks of fieldwork. Ibu Kiara, a young Indonesian woman (who had been raised in an international school, spoke fluent English, and held a university degree in education) had decided to leave after five years as the lead Kindy teacher in the Early Years Program to return to her home island of Java. Her replacement was the former Green Studies teacher, a white male from the United States, who had held multiple positions in the school. Unable to find a professional stronghold, he bounced from middle, to primary, down to early years; yet remained employed due to his easy disposition and earnest efforts. Without any background in teaching, early childhood education, early childhood development, nor proven group management skills with young learners, it was a shock to see him chosen by the Head of School to fill Ibu Kiara’s position as lead kindergarten teacher moving forward – and making over five times the salary she did while employed in the Early Years Program.

Although not the only indicator of value, monetary compensation is certainly *an* indicator – especially in a school whose community hyperactively promotes the “put your money where your mouth is” motto. If the three foundational pillars of sustainability system that Green School takes into consideration when program planning and organizing their institution mirror the social, environmental and economic (United Nations, 2018), I argue that how Green School conceptualizes social ‘sustainability’ in its community of educators is shaky in this regard. With Green School’s explicit entrepreneurial/economic focus in its founding and within its curriculum, one might argue that the school is benefitting from the cultural capital of Indonesia and its inhabitants while simultaneously devaluing the local educators who contribute to the social learning environment...yet also trying, as it appears, to respectfully contribute to the community by creating an inclusive teaching body:

Our team of educators come from all corners of the globe. We come together around a shared purpose, to educate for sustainability, and around a shared love for learning and for children. Teachers are our most precious resource and we empower and trust them to bring their passion, individual talent and creativity to education. We are offering the opportunity to work alongside a team of gifted educators, to be immersed in a community of learners and to contribute and learn from one of the world’s most unique schools. (Green School, 2016)

I cannot speak to the intricacies of Green School's budget, planning committees, operations team, hiring processes, decision makers, etc. to fill in the gaps that would help create a complete picture of this reality. I can, however, write about the repressed yet charged energy when these topics of inequality were brought up; the patterns of uncomfortably breezing over the topic of pay imbalance, the collective community's discomfort with openly engaging in constructive conversations around the details of this topic, and the implications this has for the community existing in [im]balance as a whole.

As I mentioned before, the Early Years Program was predominantly comprised of Indonesian teachers. This fact alone was one of the programs largest strengths, and one that I believe influences young children's learning at a very foundational level. Beyond simply being Indonesian, Ibu Suci, Ibu Krisna, each lead teacher, each assistant teacher, and all in-class support staff are incredibly capable and skilled educators. As discussed in my report for the Early Years Program and Green School administrators, I truly have not seen as consistently patient, aware, and supportive women in my experience teaching and observing school programs with young children. The teachers in this program operated on a baseline of 'calm'. In the Geckos class, for example, each activity and action were explained slowly, and logically (i.e. "We are going on a nature walk. What do we need? Yes, a water. Please get your water bottle from your cubby. We will line up and fill them outside together"). Children were given space to make mistakes and learn from them (i.e. a child slid down a tree trunk he was climbing and fell a short distance to the ground. Watching, the nearby teachers waited for his reaction before approaching. When he saw the teachers looking attentively from a distance, he smiled, stood up, dusted off his legs, and ran to the swing set). Teachers provided a safe, soothing space in their laps and arms for young children to relax when feeling overwhelmed. Teachers reveled in children's humor and supported their continued expressions of self. Not once in my entire semester of fieldwork, even during the most chaotic moments, did I hear a teacher raise their voice, nor act out of anger; each interaction was calm, thought out logically, explained, and acted upon with empathy. Their consistent presence sets the tone for the entire atmosphere of the program and for children's learning within it. Although Green School seems to undermine its sustainability efforts through non-transparent and unequitable faculty pay, they also have created an anomaly within the school with their Early Years Program's teacher body that combats many of the imbalances and power dynamics that exist at a larger scale within the school.

Ibu Suci supported the gradual creation of a learning environment that challenged the institutionalized inequalities that exist within the greater school over seven years within the Early Years Program. Under her role as the Head of Early Years Program, she advocated for raises for Indonesian faculty and placed Indonesian teachers in lead positions within the classrooms. These acts within her program, arguably more than any other program in Green School, promoted the beginnings of the type of sustainability one might expect in an exemplary educational model. I highlighted this point in my report for the school upon completion of my internship program:

Green School values creating strong relationships with the local community in Bali and Indonesia. A team comprised of primarily Balinese and Indonesian educators in lead positions within the program (i.e. lead teachers, program director) who were in charge of facilitating all learning experiences for young ones (beyond teaching solely Bahasa and Budaya) directly speaks positively to the level of value Green School places on local educators and their capabilities within a highly-skilled community. Children, during their earliest and most formative years, also create positive relationships with and acknowledgement of locals in leadership roles. In international school contexts where dynamics between local and international communities can become skewed through unequal power relations, the Early Years Program embodied respect, leadership, cohesion, and professionalism. (Montague, 2017, p.7)

The intertwined roles between people from Indonesia and Green School families vary; from community members, spiritual leaders, partners, friends, neighbors, advisors. At Green School (and beyond), it is also common that people from Indonesia fill the role of nannies, drivers, maintenance staff, support staff, cooks, and other related positions. While Green School outwardly treats each employee with gratitude, respect, and acknowledgement of each role being an integral part of the whole, there are inherent power dynamics between those who are in positions of power, and those who are in positions of service. This power imbalance is arguably mirrored in the Green School's classroom setting between western/international teachers and Indonesian teachers' pay difference; creating a "hidden curriculum" that runs entangled with their outward values.

The "hidden curriculum" – a term coined by the late curriculum scholar Philip Jackson (1968) – is a concept that seeks to unearth "the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life" (Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 22). It is not only the visible curriculum, the mission statements, nor the intentions that drive learning within classrooms and institutions. The social structure, the financial structure, the topics not outwardly being discussed within schools also convey specific values to the community, and to the

community's youngest learners. In this way, the hidden curriculum has the capacity to contradict the intentions of the school and "for undermining the goals of social education" (Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 23) at large.

This type of reported contradiction existing within classrooms and institutions has been well documented in educational literature. In a US study on sexism in primary aged classrooms, Barrie Thorne (1994) noted "the practices of school staff are complex and often contradictory, sometimes reinforcing and sometimes undermining social divisions and larger patterns of inequality. The organizational features of schools also work in both ways..." (p. 51). Utilizing critical race theory to situate her argument, multicultural education-focused scholar Michelle Jay (2003) finds "the hidden curriculum enables educational institutions to argue in support of multicultural initiatives while simultaneously suppressing multicultural education's transformative possibilities" (p.3). In the field of ECEFS in particular, Melinda Miller recounts in her research with imbedding Torres Strait Islander perspectives curriculum throughout two Australian ECE institutions (2014; 2017) "how racialising practices mediated the educators' work even when it was seen to be productive, inclusive and high quality" (Miller, 2017, p. 35) in their institutions that promoted reconciliation. Each context is unique yet experiences the same relationship between the outward educational efforts and the incongruities that run intertwined, albeit obscured, within them.

The place from which repressive power is exercised is hard to pinpoint in an institution like Green School's – whose mission of "a community of learners making the world sustainable" (Green School Bali, 2016) through values of integrity, respect, empathy, sustainability, peace, equity, community and trust, truly aims to do good. Scholar Russell Ferguson (1990), who studies cultural marginalization, observes: "The place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place. When we try to pin it down, the center always seems to be someplace else" (p. 9). While some scholars (i.e. critical theorist Peter McLaren) argue the hidden curriculum may be part of a national or cultural overarching plan for domination over one group of people, the goal of Green School is to foster an inclusive community that creates sustainable solutions to problems facing local and global people and the natural environment alike. "Yet," Ferguson (1990) goes on to explain, "we know that this phantom center, elusive as it is, exerts a real, undeniable power over the whole social framework of our culture and over the ways we think about it" (p. 9). When contradictions such as pay imbalance occur in the type of setting within which Green School exists, the elusive yet pervasive sense of imbalance continues to push forward as powerful undercurrents shaping how we, and the perhaps youngest of learners, view the social, cultural, and economic landscapes of 'place.'

While many “hidden curriculum” scholars discuss how institutions push forward hidden agendas within their local context (i.e. Universities in North America), the context becomes even more complicated when international institutions push forward hidden curriculums in non-local and/or [formerly] colonized contexts. Associate Professor of Integrative Studies Paul C. Gorski’s article “Good intentions are not enough: a decolonizing intercultural education,” “takes the view that despite unquestionably good intentions on the part of most people who call themselves intercultural educators, most intercultural education practices, instead of challenging the dominant hegemony, actually support prevailing social hierarchies, and inequitable distributions of power and privilege” (Gorski, 2008, p. 515). In this sense, Green School has nested in a precarious place. As an international school founded in a formerly Dutch-colonized island, much of the hidden curriculum happening within the EYP serves the dominant group of international community members, and seemingly marginalizes the historically marginalized. With the salary discrepancies in the Early Years Program, it seems that “the reality was that the classroom was a stratified society that paralleled society at large” (Margolis et al., 2001, p. 10).

It seems Green School is crafting a learning environment that floats between authentic understanding and respect of locals and place, and, perhaps unintentionally, perpetuating an inequitable power structure under the blanket efforts of “do-good” education. In this type of complex setting that promotes ‘sustainability’ – it is important to ask what sustainability actually looks like, and for whom it is actually sustainable. In the expanding field of ECEfS, it is imperative that topics such as this begin to be addressed in both research and in practice.

Within this paradoxical theory of contradiction and hiddenness, there remains room to grow into clarity. The hidden curriculum is not simply an undercurrent that always runs parallel, untouchable, to the existing outward one. Resistance theorists such as Henry Giroux (1983), Jane Roland Martin (1994) and Michael Apple (1982) complicate the dichotomy of the curriculum and the hidden curriculum by taking into account complexities such as agency, context, and culture. “Because culture is lived and produced...schools cannot be understood as simply places where students are instructed, organized, and controlled by the interests of a dominant class” (Margolis et al., 2001, p.16). Classrooms and institutions, in this regard, can also become places for transcendence. These resistance theorists postulate “contradictions open spaces for students and teachers to resist mechanisms of social control and domination and to create alternative cultural forms” (Margolis et al., 2001, p. 15). As such, Ibu Suci has been aiming to create alternative norms within Green School throughout her career as Head of the Early Years Program:

...at the beginning, when I became the head of Early Years, one, two, three couple-- five parents, maybe, they dislike it because I'm Indonesian, yeah. So instead of talking to me about problems, they chose to talk directly to Leslie or to someone because they don't believe that I'm capable to run this Learning Neighbourhood. That's the beginning, like three years ago. And then I stay calm. I didn't want to react. But then now it's different because they are more accept that and then see me as a -- see me as a local head of school that they have to talk politely to me. So they understand that, how to say? Yeah, they, now they come to me and then talk to me more polite, and then respect me. We respect each other. Yeah. That's something that I really love to see in this Learning Neighbourhood. Because before, they disbelieve in the Indonesian capability as a homeroom teacher or as a head of school. So they love to just do that. But now, we just stay calm. I told my Indonesian teacher, "There will be a time when we will be like being tested by them because we are Indonesian. But just calm and then as long as you do the right thing and then it's aligned with our program, and then valued at Early Years, it would be fine." So yes, it's better now compared to three years ago. (Ibu Suci, personal interview, April 10, 2017)

From my fieldwork in the Early Years Program, I gather that the vast majority of parents are respectful and inclusive of the largely Indonesian teaching team; however, the nuances and contradictions between groups of communities remain.

Green School is a relatively new international school that aims to create sustainable communities. Green School, being free of many of the systemic overarching power dynamics that public schools in other localities are tied to (such as aiming to create a "national identity" through formal curriculum), has the opportunity to resist uncritical examination into its unique context. Ibu Leslie, Head of School, even voiced her simultaneous gratitude and overwhelm at this concept:

And that's what we get to do, we don't have to listen to anyone. We get to go cherry-pick the best stuff out of the world and put it here and maybe tweak it. That's amazing, no other school gets to do that. You'll get caught up in all kinds of political and crap and all that other stuff that-- and so that's really special about our opportunity, but that can also get overwhelming, "Oh my God, everything's available," how do you create a criterion for yourself to decide how you will move forward? (Ibu Leslie, Personal Communication, May 3, 2017)

By hiring and supporting Indonesian teachers to fill roles otherwise held by western or international faculty, the EYP begins to create an environment that balances and promotes local leadership; not only within the school itself, but as exemplary to the young students who are learning about their social surroundings on a daily basis. If "students encounter norms, values, and beliefs through the rules and practices that form the daily routines and social relationships in the classroom and the extended school" (Margolis et al., 2001, p. 12), young learners might grow to see Indonesian

teachers in lead positions with the same amount of authority, respect, and capabilities as their western counterparts – and beyond. When asked about Green School’s strengths as a truly multicultural learning space, Ibu Suci had this to say:

It’s the Green School strength, and also the teachers. The teachers are so capable and then they know what to do. And then people came to Green School because of Green School, not because of the parent has to work in Jakarta or in Bali. But they came because of Green School, because of the curriculum that we have, because of the program, because we being an advocate for the nature. And then they really do it. It’s so real. I think that’s the strength of Green School. We do what we say, what we campaign to do – we do it, to the word, we do it. Not just talking, but we’re really doing it. That’s the strength of Green School, and then I’ve been in several international schools before Green School, and I can see that this is the only school in Indonesia, international school in Indonesia, that embrace the local. They care the locals. Local staff. The Indonesian teachers, the Indonesian staff because you will not find it outside Green School. I don’t know in Bali, but I think you are still the same, but the worst is in Java, in Jakarta. Yeah. Those fancy international school. Let’s say we still have that discrimination still, and it’s really worse outside, but at Green School, I see with my own eye, my own experience, that white people [laughter] really respect us. Embrace us. Take care of us. Yeah. That’s what I see from Green School. Especially in this last three years. (Ibu Suci, personal interview, April 10, 2017)

At the Green School, the message is there. The enthusiasm is there. The institutional ability is there. The openness to respect the complexity of people and place is there. Much of what you would think the school *should* be doing to combat these social imbalances to foster an inclusive, sustainable, and equitable community is already happening. However, perhaps fruition is not just a matter of the sum of these intentions: “If one wishes to educate students to have a commitment to their social and ecological environment, one needs to start with an emphasis on commitment rather than on locality or community” (Ruitenberg, 2005, p.219). However, how can you be committed when you may not understand the implications of that which you cannot or are not willing to see – such as the hidden curriculum? “A fundamental problem facing us is the way in which systems of domination and exploitation persist and reproduce themselves without being consciously recognized by the people involved. This is of particular import in education, where our commonly accepted practices so clearly seek to help students and to ameliorate many of the ‘social and educational problems’ facing them” (Apple, 1982, p. 12).

During formal interviews, I asked teachers: if there was one message to be taken away from the Early Years Program, what would it be? The majority of answers voiced the importance of

children's access to nature and playing outside. Ibu Russlee, perhaps reflexively aware of her position as the only international lead teacher in the midst of a complex setting, had this to say:

They [children] need a lot of guidance and modeling. So any early years teacher or parent, they also need to keep reflecting, and looking at themselves, and what are they modeling to their children and students. It's also a lot of self-work, and keeping up your energy, and-- I mean, they're so honest-- if you're too honest as an adult, it can make your life pretty hard [laughter]. But honesty is also beautiful. You can learn a lot from them. (Ibu Russlee, personal interview, May 19, 2017)

Even when these topics of power and equity are elusive and obscured by good intentions, consciously committing to diving deeper into fundamental questions such as “How concretely may official knowledge represent ideological configurations of the dominant interests in a society? How do schools legitimate these limited and partial standards of knowing as unquestioned truths?” (Apple, 2012, p. 29) will continue to illuminate the ways to improve the outward curriculum *and* combat the troubling aspects of the hidden curriculum. It is only with this constant effort that we will learn to support more holistically young learner's burgeoning understanding of the contexts in which they learn, and all individuals inhabiting these contexts.

Setting: Revisited

“The road is not paved for them,” Ibu Pipit said. After finishing nature walks, we often took the long way back to the classroom on a jagged lava stone pathway that stretched and curved under the heavy jungle foliage. Even with thick sandals, my feet would slip and twist if I wasn't being mindful about where I stepped. For the Geckos, missteps on the path meant more than slipping – it involved spills, tumbles, scrapes, and pain. Before approaching them, the teachers would wait, and calmly ask, “Are you ok?” And, usually, when a Gecko would trip - they would wince, put their hands in front of them, hoist themselves up, and carry on – in the same state of wonderment as before.

Even now, over a year after returning from fieldwork, I reflect on what life would be like when falling – and lifting yourself up – was the norm from an early age. Learning to navigate the natural environment is not an easy journey, nor is learning to navigate the greater environment that encompasses place, culture, and curriculum. Yet it is a process that young children are learning to do on a continual basis, with each step.

Where we learn and how we learn is complex; it is messy; it is layered and storied; and all places in which we situate educational models and educational models themselves are layered with complexity too. It is not just exemplary educational schools like Green School – with its global mouth piece and stunning imagery – that inhabits a complex reality and creates a complex reality where it is rooted. Each school program does; and it is up to educators to recognize these complexities and intentionally work them into a more thoughtful and relevant pedagogy to build these deep connections when they matter most – at the youngest of ages. This can be done through setting, culture and curriculum alike - and not just through the physical setting, dominant culture, and visible curriculum. How we go about understanding children within these complexities sets the tone for how they will experience and understand “place” at a deeper level now and moving forward throughout continued development. Creating a future of green leaders means dealing with the complexities we are more and more intertwined with as our global population rises, as cross-cultural exchange increases, and international relations become more prevalent. ECEfS as a whole is not just about building relationships to nature or figuring out ways to solve problems relating to it. The transformational component within ECEfS is about understanding the complex systems of which we are an inextricable part and learning how to improve them in early childhood educational settings.

It has been a precarious balance as a researcher with a questioning lens and practitioner with a hopeful lens to understand and moderate the pendulum between “why even try?” and “we must try harder.” It is also a comfortable space as an academic to reside in seeing problems rather than solutions, and therefore further promote unmoving spaces of inquiry. As my colleague Ali Sutherland noted after completing her thesis detailing North-South Mobility in an international service learning setting in Brazil, her research efforts are spurred by “a frustration with scholarly work that is limited to critique” (Sutherland, 2018, p.2).

But it is to say that we have a responsibility, as early childhood educators, to not miss the opportunity to examine these concepts thoroughly and in depth, within any setting we deem as an educational one (and beyond). ECE has already been long fighting for recognition and legitimization in the scope of schooling; as a field, it is often oversimplified and therefore often undervalued. While traction is being made in the field of ECE and ECEfS in particular, ECEfS – like many other sub-categories of sustainability are trying to do – requires broadening the scope of what ‘sustainability’ means in our world. If early childhood education for sustainability is “the enactment of transformative, empowering and participative education around sustainability issues, topics and

experiences within early education contexts” (Davis, 2014, p. 22) – research and practice needs to rise to the occasion of how to contextualize learning first and foremost. The ability to “demonstrate that critical engagement with such complex global issues as ecological sustainability generates spaces for new understandings of how ECE can contribute to theory and practice of education for sustainability” (Duhn, 2012, p. 19).



Further Discussion

Figure 4.1 Particles (top left)

Figure 4.2 Woven (top right)

Figure 4.3 *Air* (bottom left)

Summary: The Case for Complexity in ECEfS

The Green School allure is packaged in images of nature: jungle wilderness, gardens, rivers, foliage, bamboo shoots and bamboo dwellings with grass roofs; open-air access to monsoons, heat waves, gentle breezes. It is easy to see how Green School and the Early Years Program in particular supplies an ideological and practical oasis for young children to exist and learn within a natural environment. At first impression, Green School inhabits the kind of setting that early childhood educators and environmental educators dream of, that academics deem as exemplary models for immersive learning, that many people invested and/or interested in the notion of childhood and nature romanticize. Like Richard Louv's mainstream promotion of the idea that children should be in these types of natural environments in order to connect, reflect, foster creativity, and overall, thrive (2005), the image of Green School's "environment" is one that elicits an idealized representation of "how things should be" to those of us, myself included, who have been privileged enough to have had positive, nostalgia-inducing experiences within various natural landscapes in our own childhoods.

From months of collecting data, conversations with parents of students, and insights into educators' views in the Early Years Program, it was clear that the Green School's unique educational setting largely represented this type of 'pristine place' for children's connection to nature to develop. The Early Years Program provided a sense of repose from the "disconnected" world in which we inhabit (one too heavily dominated by technology and screen-time; one full of concrete, built environments), and safety from the overbearing spaces in which sustainability education itself often resides (consumed by pressing issues of plastic pollution, deforestation, atmospheric warming, rising ocean tides). Emphasizing "children's connection to nature" within the parameters of the small bamboo classrooms nestled into the heart of the Balinese jungle, first and foremost, was at the heart of the EYP.

The simple act of introducing children to natural environments is indeed one factor in the early processes of relationship forming. Yet immersion is only one factor of many that shape relationships and the learning that happens during the process. Learning environments in ECEfS are beginning to be researched as "dynamic and evolving cultural contexts, in which it is meaningless to study the child apart from other people" (Bitou & Waller, 2009; Waller, 2014) – and, as I argue, apart from the dynamic systems in which people reside. Relying on the notion that connection happens between two separate entities ("children" and "nature") is problematic; it

creates a binary narrative that is oversimplified, static, “othered” and devoid of depth – and therefore creates research, writing, and practice that reflect that disposition. It compartmentalizes humans and the environment in ways that are inauthentic to the amount of complexity that resides within each concept, educational programs, and the learning environment at large. Diving into complexities and understanding that nature is plural; nature is more than one (Latour, 2014; Duhn et al., 2017) is necessary if we are to produce impactful research and conduct impactful practice within Early Childhood Education for Sustainability initiatives.

My research findings from Green School Bali’s Early Years Program contextualize setting, culture, and curriculum as represented through four analytical, yet ultimately introductory, narratives regarding complexity. The findings, and discussion of findings, that emerged from my fieldwork were represented as intertwined progressions of questioning. As I have stated, it seems like sustainability-oriented institutions such as the Green School are crafting learning environments that float between authentic understanding and respect of culture and place, and, perhaps unintentionally, perpetuating an unequitable power structure under the guise of “do-good” education. In this type of complex setting that promotes ‘sustainability’ – it is important to ask what sustainability actually looks like, for whom it is actually sustainable, and overall what is being ‘sustained’. Tapping into more critical realms of inquiry (such as multicultural education and the hidden curriculum) begins to expand the notion of ‘sustainability’ beyond its environmental paradigm to include ‘sustainability’ as an “issue of social justice and fairness” (Davis, 2015, p. 10). These lenses illuminate areas of sustainability education otherwise overshadowed by the tendency to want to “connect children to nature” in immersive settings, without taking into account the context of where this relationship building is taking place – or the implications it may have on the youngest learners as they learn to construct meaning in our interrelated world.

As much as schools and programming efforts in ECEfS promote environmental sustainability, it is also increasingly necessary “to engage with broader sustainability themes that introduce [children] to concepts of culture, diversity and equity between groups of people in the places in which they live... To broaden the scope and potential of the promising ECEfS... it is timely to explore ways to unsettle the common framing of ECEfS practice within an environmental paradigm, and consider how social and political action goals can strengthen responses to sustainability in educational contexts” (Miller, 2014, p.64). “Nature” and “place” – and the humans that live interconnected with them - are storied, cultured, inhabited by multiple realities. This research represents the beginnings of greater understanding about interconnectedness in education

in order to “map the mutual emergence of children and their surroundings in relation to each other” (Duhn et al., 2017, p. 1360). This research contributes to the conversation that calls for addressing ECEfS with greater dynamism in our expanding global world.

Strengths and Limitations of Research

This research project’s strengths and limitations are interconnected. This is a small qualitative case study (Early Years Program) within a unique location site (Green School in Bali, Indonesia) and therefore presents limiting factors in terms of both replication and generalization. However, how I have chosen to represent the research data from this case study elicits insight into broad, overarching questions within the field of ECEfS that transcend bounded, site-specific educational programming. The methodological framework and methods I employed to organize and conduct the study itself also lend themselves to exploratory research in other settings worldwide.

One critique of this thesis may be that I chose to prioritize and represent breadth of multiple facets of the learning environment rather than depth into one specific theme or theory. However, because this thesis argued for the importance of contextualizing learning environments, it was imperative to represent many facets of the learning environment in order to do so. Furthermore, each vignette offered introductory insights into the Early Years Program (i.e. multiculturalism, critical theory) which are nascent areas of inquiry in international ECEfS settings as a whole. While I will expand upon these specific themes that arose throughout my data in future publications, I intentionally chose to construct this thesis to illuminate the complexities of place in a comprehensive sense.

While the body of this work was an amalgamation of the narratives of those with whom I researched (children, teachers, administrators, and the larger community of the school and island), the majority of the literature that informed the foundation for this project was produced by western academics; a large portion of whom are Australian researchers who have been driving forces in the field of ECEfS since its inception. While these scholars have created meaningful pathways of inquiry and continue to expand the scope of the field at large, my research may have benefitted from including more diverse voices in order to contextualize the case study with more depth (for example, seeking out and incorporating more research from Balinese or Indonesian scholars). I believe that an unintentional byproduct of my thesis – which ultimately aims to promote deeper lived and

intellectual interconnectivity within the field of ECEfS – may have been one that perpetuated a disconnect between various groups of people in the content and form of this thesis.

Social science research acknowledges that a researcher’s subjectivity is ever present – which affects the research in some shape or form. Although this research was informed by the collective of my research participants, it was also written from my position as an outside, foreign researcher; my questioning voice is present throughout each vignette as I constructed meaning from the research data and research experience itself. While this intentional personal insertion of myself into the writing may be seen as a weakness, I argue that in doing so the research was strengthened as I was challenged to be consistently and thoroughly reflexive about my research position and research topic as I embraced its evolution with my research participants over time. Questioning and representing my own position, and how the relationships of many different groups of people played out in the research environment, is what ultimately led to the depth of this body of research.

Implications for Future Research

From the time I began this research project in 2015 to the time in which it was completed in 2019, ECEfS is emerging as a field with expanding breadth and depth of research and practice. Researchers in the field of ECEfS are dissecting the often-oversimplified dichotomy between children and nature - and have begun to situate learning in diverse local place-based contexts internationally. Informed by areas of inquiry stemming from my research at Green School in Indonesia, there are exciting directions in research that aim to expand ways of conceptualizing early childhood education for sustainability in dynamic, intertwined cultural and geographic landscapes. The following areas of inquiry are ones I believe will emerge as the most impactful when considering studying ECEfS and contextualized learning.

Critical Theory. As highlighted in the findings section of this thesis, the field of ECEfS would benefit from more critical inquiry to guide responsible practices between groups of people and young children’s learning environments. Adopting perspectives from critical theorists may aid in understanding issues such as colonization and power structures related to sustainability-oriented educational initiatives abroad. For example, Melinda Miller (2014; 2017) incorporates whiteness studies and decolonizing pedagogy into her research as a way to approach issues of power and privilege in Australian ECEfS settings with young children. Because educational efforts often contribute to various forms of oppression in schools and within societies, “Anti-oppressive education” acknowledges this trend and intentionally works against creating or perpetuating this

trend (Kumashiro, 2000; Freire, 1968). Approaching ECEfS with a desire for deeper inquiry will help us better understand the broad question of how “might environmental education address the linkage between social justice and sustainable, mutually healthy, human relations with the rest of nature?” (Harvester & Blenkinsop, 2010, p. 120).

Recent literature regarding the colonized world (Blenkinsop et al., 2017) “implicates all environmental educators, early childhood as well, in a complex project that is not simply about providing opportunities for students to encounter the wild. It also requires helping children to not slide into the privileged and alienated discourses in which they are often immersed” (Jickling et al., 2018, p.8). As the field continues to expand worldwide, it is imperative that research in the field shift to address how hegemonic interests are produced or challenged within global ECEfS contexts. “The ability to identify and describe more fully what colonial effects look like in early childhood education and how they are reproduced in many forms, enables educators to...identify how they inherit and mobilise colonial effects of whiteness and racism in daily practice, and how they can reduce rather than reinforce impacts of these effects within practices and interactions with others” (Miller, 2017, p.34).

Post-Humanism/Common World Frameworks. Continuing the trend in ECEfS, adopting frameworks such as post-humanism has “the potential to create a comprehensive context for conceiving a broader, complex and interconnected world...which could help us understand “sustainability” from a relational perspective” (Weldemariam, 2017, p. 119). Academics that are advocating for reconceptualizing context include Affrica Taylor, Australian academic and founding member of the Common World Childhoods Research Collective, who has written at length about reconceptualizing inclusion in ECE settings (2017). Similarly, Iris Duhn, a German sociologist teaching and conducting research in Australia has contributed foundational work in critical childhood studies where conceptualizes ‘place’ as fluid in relation to sustainability education. “While much of the literature on ‘place-based pedagogy’ argues for a commitment to place-based local environments as a counterpoint to globalization” she argues, “taking place seriously means that attention shifts from the individual child to the child’s entanglement with forces and forms of all sorts, both human and more-than-human” (Duhn, 2012, p.99,104). This notion is especially intriguing when examining environmental or sustainability education in urban settings (Duhn, 2017), as well as examining place-based education in historical contexts (Díaz-Díaz & Gleason, 2015; Díaz-Díaz, 2017).

Indigenous Pedagogies. Various facets of environmental education are emphasizing the importance of Indigenous education and education for reconciliation: “good practice in early childhood education integrates Indigenous knowledge, sustainable living practices, basic human rights and learning through experience” (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2010, p. 11). Researchers in countries such as Canada (Korteweg & Russell, 2012) and Australia (Somerville & Hickey, 2017) in particular have a growing research base in this area. Sustainability education - which grew out of the United Nation’s goal to prioritize equity in relation to societies and resources – would benefit from working more collaboratively with, or following suit of, Indigenous ontologies and pedagogies outside of the western sustainability paradigm. Studies are beginning to show how traditional ways of knowing are intersecting with ECEfS programming in particular. For example, researchers in the United States, Fikile Nxumalo and Stacia Cedillo, note the “tensions between posthuman geographies, Indigenous onto-epistemologies, and Black feminist geographies [and] consider how together they might enrich critical place-attuned early childhood studies” (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017, p.99). Paying closer attention to how Indigenous communities conceptualize and interact with their environment (for example, by analyzing and understanding the Tri Hita Karana philosophy in Bali) opens spaces to improve sustainability programming and focus on “inter-connectedness and relationships between culture, people, spaces and environment” (Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2013, p. 328; Duhn, 2012) worldwide.

Post-Sustainability Movements. While much of this research was birthed out of a place to expand ECEfS programming, I emerge questioning if the UN-oriented sustainability paradigm is in fact an adequate educational framework to address the types of radical change needed to foster healthy relationships with people and the environment on a global scale. My colleague A. Elizabeth Beattie and I often discuss the semantics of “sustainability” – and question the premise of the word surrounding the movement: “Is anything in our socio-ecological situation (even thinking globally) so good that we want to sustain it? Wouldn't we rather improve it? In terms of sustainability education, what we seem to really mean is developing more or less of things, like peace, famine, environmental destruction, etc. Why do we use the word “sustainability” when in fact what we want is change? There are inherent problems to economic “development” that make it non-sustainable, no matter how we manipulate language or figures - sustainability is a discourse embedded in a rhetoric of colonization and disempowerment of many successful, land-based, traditional ways of being...” (A. Elizabeth Beattie, personal communication, September 28, 2018). These are thoughts that I continue

to analyze on an ongoing basis as a researcher in the field of environmental and sustainability education.

Karen Malone, Son Truong, and Tonia Gray compiled a collection of articles in collectively titled “Reimagining Sustainability in Precarious Times” (2017) which addresses some of the concerns surrounding the concept of ‘sustainability’ and offer insights into challenging, re-framing, and growing from the paradigm (discussing common world pedagogies, “the ecology of relationships”, and connecting knowledge traditions). Academics are now not only looking deeper into the sustainability movement, they are reaching beyond it. Creating new ways of thinking for sustainability (and beyond) will be an exciting boundary to expand into for ECE researchers and practitioners alike.

Expanding Research Contexts. Research is only beginning to expand in ECEfS in diverse international contexts. While my research addresses a new location of inquiry in Bali, Indonesia, it focused on a privileged international institution. Largely, ECEfS has not reported

on what is happening in nations and regions where early childhood education as a formal societal structure may not exist, or where simply staying alive is the most pressing sustainability issue for many children. We envisage, however, that our contributions may prompt other researchers and authors to widen the scope of research and reporting, so that truly international and global insights are presented in future works. (Davis & Elliott, 2014, p. 3)

Indeed, it is not only in formal, privileged ECE institutions that ECEfS programming is taking place – in some shape or form. Theory and practice in ECEfS would further be strengthened, articulated, and illustrated through examples of diverse programming and critical examination of context if researchers continue to report on exemplary models of formal or informal ECE education in underrepresented global locations.

Implications for Practice

As sustainability educational efforts expand to encompass more complexity, so too do “early childhood teachers need to be aware, flexible, and creative as they respond to increasingly complex social, political, and economic challenges” (Ramsey, 2009, p. 232) in our ecological educational landscapes. While “there is no one right way to engage in education for sustainability, particularly in a dynamic global context where change is the only constant (Stibbe and Luna 2009)” (Davis & Elliott, 2014, p.9), my research urges academics and practitioners alike to embrace a more holistic understanding of ECEfS learning contexts and the implications these dynamic places have for young

learners. If the goal of ECEfS is building transformational education that encourages young children to take action in their environments, we first need to transform how we understand the places this transformation is being enacted. This process is guided by a need for greater reflexivity on the part of teachers, administrators, and program developers first and foremost. “Reflexivity aids integrity in educational practice because it provides a balance between depicting practice in particular ways and being actively consciousness about underlying complexities that can be brought to the surface to encourage deeper understanding” (Miller, 2017, p. 45). As Dr. Maureen Kendrick urged me to do during fieldwork, I encourage practitioners to not only look for what “is there” in their programming (i.e. natural setting, cultural diversity), but also look for what “is not there” (i.e. equitable, transparent pay amongst faculty, or other systemic and oppressive power structures being carried forth inside or outside of the classroom). Once we take the steps to looking deeper into our beliefs, situations, and programming, we can begin to understand complexity within our learning environments – and improve our practices moving forward.

United-States based ECE advocate Sarah Foglesong recently published a practitioner-based article titled “Building Cultural Empathy and Celebrating Diversity in Nature-based Early Childhood Education”. This article provides a series of questions to use as a helpful guideline in the process of moving into deeper understanding in the field of ECE/EE. Although this article is geared towards building cultural empathy in particular, I argue the emphasis on reflexivity translates to many contexts within ECEfS settings: she encourages practitioners to reflect, be curious and listen, do some research, analyze your curriculum for hidden messages, include students [and your community’s] cultures in your daily routine, invite family and community members to visit your classroom (Foglesong, 2018). “Unlike other educational levels, ECE typically has relatively open and flexible curricula, which allows the opportunity to design a learning environment that cultivates a holistic and relational world view” (Weldemariam, 2017, p. 116). Guided by reflexive practices, practitioners can work towards creating more holistic, contextualized, and impactful programming with their young learners.

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