

EXAMINING A BUSINESS COMMUNITY'S READINESS TO TAKE ON
SUSTAINABILITY

BY

MELISSA SELEM

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Community Health
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Lydia Buki, Chair
Lecturer Steve Notaro
Professor William Stewart
Associate Professor Amy Woods

ABSTRACT

Businesses contribute greatly to climate change and can have a large impact on their local environment through their energy consumption and waste production. One way to help businesses make the transition toward green practices and engage in more environmentally responsible behaviors is through environmental certification (EC) programs. However, there is a scant literature on the implementation of ECs at the community level or the accessibility of ECs for small businesses. To address this gap in the literature I first conducted a Community Readiness Assessment to understand the local community's readiness to support sustainable business practices. Second, using Social Marketing principles I interviewed business representatives to uncover the specific factors (i.e., barriers and motivators) that influence a business to pursue an environmental certification in the Champaign-Urbana community. The results of the CRA indicate the Champaign-Urbana community is at a preplanning stage to address business sustainability and would benefit from efforts to increase awareness on the need for greener business practices. Findings from the business interviews indicate a variety of factors can influence a business's interest in certification. Primary among these is a supportive community context, a sense of responsibility, as well as time and financial restrictions. Overall, the dissertation study makes four important contributions. First, the community context is an important influential factor in businesses' decision to obtain an EC. Second, the study extends the literature on barriers and motivators toward certification. Third, it presents information about how businesses in a pilot EC program are unique, and fourth, the methodology implemented is a unique combination of theories that are transferable to other investigations and communities.

To my Mom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing a dissertation is a true testament of one's training, dedication, and adaptability. On this journey, I had much help along the way that deserves recognition. To my advisor and mentor, Dr. Lydia Buki, thank you for encouraging me to pursue my true passion, not to mention the countless hours of help, guidance, and reading of drafts! Thank you also to my other committee members, Drs. Bill Stewart, Steve Notaro, and Amy Woods, for lending their respective areas of expertise and supporting my interest in this research topic. I would also like to extend my deepest appreciation to the Illinois Green Business Association; this project could not have existed without their collaboration. I am also grateful to my partner in life, Juanmanuel Garcia-Sanchez, for always being willing to hear out my ideas, for managing the delicate balance of both challenging and supporting me, for believing in me even when I did not, and for your endless patience with this seemingly endless project. Lastly, thank you to all the friends and family who surrounded me, listening and offering kind words as needed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
CHAPTER 3: METHODS	40
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	55
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	102
REFERENCES	116
APPENDIX A: IGBA BUSINESS INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	125
APPENDIX B: NON-IGBA BUSINESS INTERVIEW GUIDE	127

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	<i>Business Barriers and Motivators</i>	21
2	<i>County and City Population Statistics</i>	37
3	<i>Distribution of Number of Employees</i>	38

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. accounts for approximately 5% of the world's population, yet consumes about 25% of the world's energy (Markham, 2008). More specifically, the business sector claims 50.3% of total U.S. energy use. Energy use correlates highly with carbon emissions, which are a major contributor to climate change (Gardner & Stern, 2008). Businesses are also implicated in other environmentally damaging behaviors such as waste generation, contamination of land and water, and depletion of non-renewable resources. These behaviors contribute to climate change as well as to public health concerns (e.g., contamination of air) and economic problems (e.g., depletion of limited resources). Thus, business practices can influence a variety of important areas. However, this impact does not have to be a negative one. Problems concerning business practices can be conceptualized not only as a challenge, but also as an opportunity for change.

Changes in business practices are already well underway and range from simply using compact fluorescent bulbs to exploring new ways of producing energy, such as wind farms and solar power (Business Roundtable Sustainability Report, 2010). Consumer research shows that demand is growing for “green” products (i.e., products that are less damaging to the environment) and that consumers are willing to pay more for such products, even in difficult financial times (Manget, Roche, & Munnich, 2009). A growing body of literature suggests that consumer demand for environmental responsibility and the ensuing business response could bring about a new kind of industrial revolution, meaning the creation of new markets (the “green market”), new technologies, and new jobs (Roth, 2008). In fact, consistent with these observations, the “clean energy” sector has been one of the few to demonstrate sustained growth in a difficult economy. Additionally, a report by the Pew Charitable Trusts (2009) indicated that

between 1998 and 2007, jobs in the clean energy sector grew by 9.1%, compared to 3.7% for the traditional sectors.

However, the green movement is not without its flaws; some authors have gone so far as to call it dysfunctional (Wynne, 1994). Many businesses that claim to be environmentally responsible have changed their products' labels, not their products or their practices. Businesses that demonstrate true environmental responsibility are in the minority, with the majority still contributing greatly to environmental problems rather than to the solutions. One way to help businesses make the transition toward green practices and engage in more environmentally responsible behaviors is through environmental certification (EC) programs.

Environmental Certification Programs

There are countless EC programs available, but most function in the same fundamental way. The program audits a business by evaluating a variety of environmentally-related areas (e.g., waste production, energy efficiency, carbon footprint) and sets criteria the business must meet to receive the EC. Moreover, the EC helps the business transition to more sustainable practices by offering resources and ideas to meet the requirements for certification. Businesses stand to benefit in several ways: they receive the EC and gain community recognition for their efforts, they appeal to a new segment of eco-conscious consumers by donning the EC logo, and perhaps most importantly to businesses, they may see a reduction in operational costs and increase in profits by implementing the efficiency recommendations.

Although environmental certification programs are an excellent tool for businesses trying to improve their environmental impact, research on ECs are limited. The EC programs that have been studied tend to be large-scale and are implemented nationwide or even internationally. There is a scant literature that addresses the implementation of ECs at the community level.

Moreover, studies exploring the factors (i.e., barriers and motivators) that influence a business's decision to become certified are scarce. Studies that do explore these factors are predominantly based in the United Kingdom, tend to be industry specific, and focus on the production sector (e.g., paper mill, mining, wine makers). Thus, the generalizability of these studies toward an EC that is community-based and focused on the service sector is questionable.

Locally, the Illinois Green Business Association (IGBA), a non-profit community-based organization started by a group of students and community members, is in the process of piloting an environmental certification program for Champaign County. Though the group is knowledgeable about certification criteria, there are no local or regional data available assessing the community's level of readiness to support an EC program. There is also no known literature describing the community climate's influence on local businesses' decision to be certified. In addition, the IGBA has never formally measured the factors that influence a business's decision to become certified, which is crucial information for program planning according to Social Marketing principles (Maibach, Rothschild, & Novelli, 2002).

To gain a deeper understanding of these issues and to assist the IGBA in their community-based efforts, in this study I conducted a community readiness assessment as well as interviews with business representatives to uncover the specific factors (i.e., barriers and motivators) that influence a business to pursue an environmental certification in the Champaign-Urbana community.

Theoretical and Methodological Models

This study used a community-based approach to the research and was developed in collaboration with the IGBA with the goal of helping to support their implementation and development of an EC program. As this study evolved, I had ongoing meetings with the IGBA to

keep them updated on my progress and to be certain the direction of the work was consistent with their goals as well. Social Marketing (SM; Kotler & Lee, 2008) served as the conceptual framework for the development of research questions, and the Community Readiness Model (CRM; Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000) as the guiding methodology to answer the research questions. These conceptual frameworks are briefly introduced next.

Environmental certification programs, especially those implemented by non-profit organizations, are not unlike most change initiatives and health promotion programs. However, the health and business fields rarely borrow from each other. Social Marketing (SM; Kotler & Lee, 2008), a program-planning model, is a rare example of a model used in a variety of fields, though it is still predominantly health oriented. It has been used to address environmental and conservation issues (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 1999), although there is no indication in the literature that it has been applied to EC programs. Thus, one of the contributions of the present study is the application of SM to the development of an EC program.

Social Marketing is founded on the same principle as traditional consumer marketing. However, a key difference between consumer marketing and SM is that the goal of SM is behavior change for social good rather than for profit (Kotler & Lee, 2008). This distinction makes SM a good fit for the proposed study because the goal of encouraging businesses to adopt environmentally responsible practices is a social good that can be achieved while maintaining the profit-earning appeals that businesses require.

Social Marketing emphasizes the importance of having a thorough understanding of the group of interest prior to program implementation. This includes understanding the challenges the group faces and the factors that motivate its members to engage in the desired behavior. With

this information, Social Marketing outlines various steps to effect behavior change. The beginning steps of SM are those taken in preparation for program development, and include selecting and studying the group of interest, as well as identifying barriers and motivators to the desired behavior. Consistent with the purpose of the study, these beginning steps of SM will be the focus of the present study.

Given the community focus of this study, use of the Community Readiness Assessment (CRA; Plested, Edwards, & Jumper-Thurman, 2006) is appropriate to address the beginning steps of the Social Marketing plan, as it allows the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the group of interest. The CRA is also intended for community-based work, and involves conducting interviews with community leaders to garner information about a given issue. Based on the literature review, and using the CRM and SM as frameworks, next I present the rationale and research questions for the present study.

Rationale and Research Questions

Businesses are one of the largest contributors to climate change, and thus are a prime target for sustainability initiatives. Environmental certifications are a promising solution to reduce businesses' environmental impact. However, community-based ECs are not represented in the literature, and further investigation is needed into the barriers and motivators businesses face toward certification. Furthermore, no community assessment of the Champaign-Urbana community has been done to determine the specific factors that may influence local businesses. Thus, the current study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the community context linked to businesses' willingness to embrace sustainable practices?

- a. At what stage of readiness is the Champaign-Urbana community to address businesses' environmental practices?
 - b. What are the specific motivators and barriers that Champaign-Urbana restaurant, retail, and office businesses face toward environmental certification?
2. How do SM and CRM contribute to an exploration of business sustainability practices at the local level?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study represents a unique intersection of many fields of research. Much of the research presented in this chapter was generated in the business field (e.g., management, social responsibility), but it also comes from the psychology, community development, community health, environmental health, and sustainability areas. Drawing from the literature in these fields, I begin the chapter with a brief discussion on the concept of sustainability and provide an overview of the current state of sustainability in the U.S., highlighting businesses' contribution. Second, I discuss businesses and their social responsibility, focusing on their environmental responsibility. Third, I present the current research on environmental certifications as well as barriers and motivators that businesses encounter in the implementation of environmental practices. Next, I broaden the scope by exploring businesses within the community context. Lastly, I explain the theories and models guiding the proposed study, and end the chapter by providing a profile of the Champaign-Urbana business community.

The Concept of Sustainability

Generally defined, the term “sustainable” refers to a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged (Merriam-Webster, 2008). However, the term has come to mean much more than this. The Iroquois nicely captured the importance and meaning of the concept in the saying "In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations" (Willers, 1991). The most cited definition of “sustainable development” comes from the 1987 Brundtland Report: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Schmuck & Schultz, 2002). This definition is not without

criticism, particularly due to its lack of clarity and vagueness. However, given that there are well over 300 attempts to define sustainability and its many derivatives, providing a concise and simple definition or explanation of the term is no easy feat (Schmuck & Schultz, 2002). A broader understanding of sustainability can be derived from the many definitions available in the literature; that is, sustainability as a concept encompassing three overlapping areas often referred to as the three pillars or the three-legged stool: the economy, environment, and society.

According to this conceptualization, the “economy” refers to financial and monetary issues, “environment” refers to the physical environment of the planet, and “society” refers to people in the broadest sense, encompassing issues of equity, health, as well as future generations. These three areas are interconnected such that any input or change in one will inevitably cause changes in the others (Vos, 2007; Walley & Taylor, 2002).

For instance, over-reliance on fossil fuels, a limited natural resource, creates pollution, releases toxins, and disrupts the balance of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere. These pollutants and toxins affect the health of plants, animals, and people. Over time, the accumulation of the carbon dioxide emitted from burning and harvesting the fossil fuel will begin to change weather patterns (i.e., climate change), which affects health through an increased incidence of natural disasters. As the supply of fossil fuels begins to decline (as it inevitably will because it is a finite resource) prices of this commodity will fluctuate wildly, causing a ripple effect of unstable prices for anything that relies on fossil fuels (i.e., the majority of products and services). In short, overuse of fossil fuels (representing the environmental pillar), has consequences on health (the society pillar), as well as on economic stability (the economic pillar). Ultimately, a disruption in one area will tip the balance of the other systems, as they are all interconnected (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], n.d.).

Given the importance of this concept, in the next section I will provide a brief history of the term to provide context for the rest of this chapter.

Sustainability: A Historical Context

It may seem that the idea of sustainability in the U.S. is relatively new, yet the concept has been evolving for more than 200 years to become the movement seen at present. In the U.S., the origins for the concept of sustainability can be dated as far back as the 1800s through transcendentalist writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson (Edwards, 2005). The beginnings of the concept of sustainability coincide with the beginning of the industrial revolution and the beginning of anthropogenic (i.e., man-made) climate change (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], n.d.). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the conservationist John Muir perceived the protection of our resources such as the trees and water as essential, establishing the well known Sierra Club. Muir was also influential in President Theodore Roosevelt's ongoing conservation efforts (1901 – 1909; Sierra Club, 2009). Later, the publication of Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book *Silent Spring* in 1962 brought to light the various health consequences of toxins (e.g., pesticides) in the environment, which facilitated the dawn of the environmental movement (Natural Resources Defense Council, 1997). The 1970s and 80s, in turn, saw the birth of the environmental revolution (Edwards, 2005), where environmental concerns over pollution and ozone depletion became more widespread. Recognizing the concerns of the public and vocal activist groups, the first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970 followed by the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA; Lewis, 1985). Around this time, environmental concerns were beginning to gain attention on the world stage, as evidenced by the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Sweden, also known as the Stockholm Conference. At

this conference, which focused on pollution, a global conversation began about the association between the environment and economic issues, two critical components of sustainability as it is understood today.

Though the term *sustainable* was not yet used commonly, in 1984 evidence was mounting that the current path humans were on was simply *unsustainable*. That year, the Worldwatch Institute published its first State of the World Annual Report (Brown, 1984), which provided a global overview of the association between the world's resources and economic development. The Worldwatch Institute's report stated: "We are living beyond our means, largely by borrowing against the future" (as cited in Edwards, 2005). A few years later, the United Nations put forth the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), and the beginnings of the term sustainability as we understand it in its current form was born, giving sustainable development a definition on the world stage (Edwards, 2005). Since then, countries such as the U.S. have endeavored to examine and improve their current state of sustainability, with the goal of moving toward a more sustainable future (UNFCC, n.d.). In the following section, I focus on the current state of businesses' sustainability in the U.S.

Current State of Sustainability among Businesses in the U.S.

There is ample documentation that the U.S. is a major contributor to climate change and is currently consuming resources at an unsustainable rate (Markham, 2008). However, the different sectors of the U.S. contribute to this state of affairs to varying degrees. For instance, 31% of energy use is consumed by the industrial sector (i.e., manufacturing, agriculture, mining, and construction), 28% by transportation, 22% by the residential sector, and 19% by the commercial sector (i.e., service businesses such as malls, hospitals, restaurants; U.S. Energy

Information Administration, 2009). Blocked together as the “business sector,” industry, business transportation, and commerce jointly account for 62% of total U.S. energy use (Gardner & Stern, 2008). In other words, businesses consume well over half of the total energy use in the U.S. In addition to energy use, there is their water usage to consider as well as waste generation and carbon emissions, all environmentally relevant issues.

U.S. businesses are generally categorized by size or income. Large corporations tend to have the most visible impact on the environment and have traditionally been targeted by environmental groups and regulatory agencies such as the EPA. Unfortunately, there is no measure of how much small businesses contribute to environmental degradation, despite the fact that they make up 99% of all businesses (U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2009). The SBA defines a small business as one with fewer than 500 employees, or with less than a specific gross income depending on the sector (SBA, 2009). For instance, in the restaurant and clothing retail sectors, total annual receipts cannot surpass \$7 million to be considered a small business (SBA, 2008). In the U.K., which has produced the largest literature on business and environmental certification, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are grouped together, and must have a maximum of 250 employees. SMEs also make up 99% of businesses in the U.K. (European Commission, 2010).

Despite the fact that small businesses make up the vast majority of businesses, there is a surprisingly limited literature on small businesses’ impact on the environment (Guében & Skerratt, 2007; Tilley, 1999), and the majority of this literature is based in the U.K. There is more research available on large business practices, although research for one cannot be generalized to the other, given important differences. For example, in small businesses there is less often a distinction between owner and manager, which means the owner is often playing

multiple roles with less time to consider ways to improve environmental practices. Large corporations may have an environmental manager whose sole responsibility is to address environmental issues. Environmental solutions for large firms (e.g., creating new, more environmentally friendly technology to suit the company's needs) may not be feasible for smaller firms with fewer resources at their disposal (Tilley, 1999). There is also the question of whether implementing more sustainable practices will be financially beneficial for large firms, although there is a positive association between environmental performance and financial performance for small firms (Clemens, 2006). Because the vast majority (99%) of the businesses in Champaign-Urbana community are small (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007), this literature review will focus on small businesses wherever possible.

Having reviewed some statistics on businesses and the environment, and presented background information on small businesses in particular, I now turn to businesses' response to environmental issues, the green movement. I will explain this term and describe some of the challenges for businesses and consumers associated with this movement.

Going Green: Consumer and Business Challenges

The green movement in the business world is a highly popular, consumer-driven change toward improved environmental practices. The term *green* is a consumer-friendly alternative to the term *sustainable*, and can be used to imply that a given product is made with, or that a given business is acting with, environmental concern. It is a very subjective term, which is perhaps its appeal in the business world. Thus, given its predominantly colloquial use, a definition based in empirical writing is very difficult to find. Nevertheless, the green movement or "green consumerism" is a powerful tool by which consumers in essence vote with their dollars to support and reward products that are more environmentally friendly (Wynne, 1994). This

movement is having a strong impact in the business world, spurring many businesses to go green (Ambec & Lanoie, 2008).

Not all businesses are interested in becoming stewards of the environment, yet most do not want to miss out on a large marketing opportunity. Many businesses claim to be environmentally responsible but have only changed their products' labels, not their products or their practices. This practice of making products appear more natural and eco-friendly is termed *green washing*, and is essentially a form of consumer deception (Peattie & Crane, 2005; Wynne, 1994). Green washing has flooded the markets, eroding consumer trust in green products and causing consumers to have an increasingly hard time distinguishing truly green products from those that are simply marketed to appear green (Peattie & Crane, 2005).

There is another important challenge related to the green movement. Businesses that are legitimately interested in making their practices more sustainable also face a considerable challenge, that is, how does a business become green? Most businesses, particularly small ones, do not have the knowledge or skills necessary to implement the necessary changes to go green (Masurel, 2007; Tilley, 1999). There is a substantial gap between firm managers' aspirations to green their business and their actual practices, providing further evidence that a lack of know-how to implement green practices is having a detrimental effect (Tilley, 1999).

In sum, going green is an alluring prospect for consumers and businesses alike. However, problems arise in the practical implementation of going green. In the next sections I highlight the literature that addresses relevant initiatives, including Corporate Social Responsibility, Environmental Certifications, and Environmental Management Systems.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one of the oldest and best-known concepts that

advocates for businesses to be held to a higher standard and go beyond simply focusing on the bottom line. Carroll (1991) explained it most concisely: “The CSR firm should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen.” The term CSR dates back to before the 1950s, but became a more prominent fixture of the business world in the 1970s in response to the creation of the EPA, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The creation of all these agencies further encouraged businesses to incorporate CSR into their practices (Carroll, 1991).

Throughout the history of CSR, the importance of the environment has waxed and waned along with other topics such as a focus on communities, consumers, or employees. In a 1992 study that surveyed leading researchers in the field of social issues in business management, researchers found that less than 9% of participants named environmental issues as an important research topic in their area (Carroll, 1994). Thus, the environment as a social concern for business management researchers was a low ranking concern. However, this may be changing as more current literature indicates that environmental stewardship is becoming a central issue for CSR scholars once again (Montiel, 2008).

Corporate Social Responsibility brings attention to businesses’ responsibility in environmental issues, but because the term incorporates a variety of other issues such as fair employment practices and being charitable, environmental effects and the goals of sustainability are not always center stage. Therefore, a business may be socially responsible but not necessarily focus on its environmental impact. A more tailored approach to the problem of businesses impact on the environment is the creation of “eco-logos” or environmental certifications (EC), which focus specifically on sustainability issues. The following section introduces environmental certifications, what they are, and how they function. Similar initiatives such as Environmental

Management Systems and industry or trade association certifications are also briefly described.

Environmental Certifications

Environmental certification can be broadly defined as “a set of consistent standards and practices whose application by industry simultaneously creates environmental/social and net economic benefits” (Conservation and Community Investment Forum [CCIF], 2002). EC resolves consumers’ concerns over green washing because it provides a form of evidence that the business or product has met specific criteria. Also, certifying organizations often act as a resource and in some cases offer assistance and guidance to the business throughout the certification process, thus helping businesses to build the knowledge base and skills they often struggle with in their efforts to go green. A business interested in certification often pays a fee and submits to verification checks ensuring it has met certification requirements. When the criteria have been met, the business can display evidence of certification usually in the form of a logo (Wynne, 1994).

Another option for businesses that wish to improve their environmental practices is to use an Environmental Management System (EMS). As the title implies, an EMS is a form of business management that focuses on environmental issues. Environmental goals for the business are established with the expectation that environmental performance will improve (Silverman, Marshall, & Cordano, 2005). Perhaps the most popular and well established EMS is the ISO 14001, developed by the International Organization for Standardization, an international non-governmental organization. This document provides guidance and standards for businesses who are interested in sustainable development (Quazi, Khoo, Tan, & Wong, 2001). However, EMSs tend to be used by larger corporations and are less well suited for small- and medium-sized businesses. This is generally the case because EMS programs require more independence on the

part of the business, they offer guidelines and recommendations but they offer less individualized assistance on how to implement the guidelines. Because small and medium-sized businesses are unlikely to use an EMS, this literature review will not focus on such programs.

Factors that Influence Business Engagement in Environmental Practices

Barriers and motivating factors that influence businesses' engagement in environmental practices can be classified as internal or external to the business (Guében & Skerratt, 2007; Harris & Crane, 2002; Masurel, 2007). Internal factors are specific to the business and can include monetary and time restrictions as well as the owner or manager's attitudes and beliefs about EC. External factors have more to do with the context the business operates under, and can include pressure or support from the government and the community. In the next section, I describe these in more detail, presenting first the internal forces and second the external forces acting as motivators and barriers to EC. These are also summarized in Table 1.

Internal factors affecting environmental certification.

Financial requirements and time.

The main priority of a business is to make a profit, so logically the prospect of an EC affecting the bottom line is a major concern. Many businesses, particularly those not interested in EC, cite finances as a major barrier to making their business practices more sustainable (Bianchi & Noci, 1998; Harris & Crane, 2002; Michael, Echols, & Bukowski, 2010; Tilley, 1999). Yet, there is strong support for the ability of EC programs to reduce costs and increase revenue (Ambec & Lanoie, 2008; Clemens, 2006). Cost reduction can come in the way of avoiding problems with stakeholders and local communities (e.g., government or environmental groups), and by attracting young, well educated workers, many of whom are willing to forego up to 14% of their wages to work within an organization with a positive image and strong commitment to

social issues (Ambec & Lanoie, 2008). Additionally, improved efficiency of machinery, reduced water and energy use, and lowered waste are all ways EC requirements can help a business reduce its costs (Masurel, 2007). A certified business can also benefit from increased revenue through access to a larger consumer market, and by increasing its competitiveness among similar businesses (Masurel, 2007). Also, many of the larger EC programs encourage or require transactions with other certified businesses. Thus, gaining the EC opens doors to work with other certified partners (Ambec & Lanoie, 2008).

After financial concerns, businesses often cite time limitations as a major barrier to pursuing certification (Bianchi & Noci, 1998; Michael, Echols, & Bukowski 2010). For small businesses in particular, where owners are often also managers, time is exceedingly limited and precious (Bianchi & Noci, 1998). Learning about the certification process, implementing the certification requirements, and training staff are all costly in terms of the time these activities require.

Organizational culture.

Organizational barriers and organizational culture refer broadly to office politics and to the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of management and employees taken as a whole (Post & Altman, 1994). When the dominant culture of the business is unfavorable for engagement in environmental issues, this acts as a significant barrier not only for the business as a whole, but also for any individual within the business to encourage environmental practices. For instance, in some businesses where environmental concerns are not prevalent or even rejected, an individual who expresses an interest in recycling or reducing waste could be pigeonholed as the environmentalist and ultimately lead to marginalization by other workers (Harris & Crane, 2002).

The beliefs and attitudes of business owners or managers can act as a barrier or motivator toward EC. In particular, the belief that one's business does not contribute to environmental problems acts as a considerable barrier to EC (Tilley, 1999). Owners' and managers' knowledge can also be an important factor for EC. For instance, low levels of environmental awareness and lack of knowledge about business support services, can act as barriers (Tilley, 1999). Interestingly, one study found that business owners or managers who already recognized environmental problems believed that national and local governments should take more leadership to encourage pro-environmental behavior from businesses (Rutherford, Blackburn, & Spence, 2000). This suggests that these businesses may be more likely to engage in green practices when external pressures are present. Conversely, in a study that surveyed businesses that had won awards for their environmental efforts, the predominant motivating factor reported was "management conviction," meaning a desire on the part of management to pursue pro-environmental practices (Guében & Skerratt, 2007; Masurel, 2007).

Research also suggests that there is a difference in owners' and managers' perceptions of the difficulty associated with obtaining EC. Owners and managers in non-certified businesses consistently perceived more barriers and hardships than certified businesses reported experiencing. Thus, certifying organizations must do more work around dispelling false negative beliefs about the process and costs of certification, while extolling the competitive advantages as well as the improved stakeholder relations that certification offers (Michael, Echols, & Bukowski, 2010).

By becoming green, a business can also help to improve working conditions for its employees, which has been found to be a strong motivator for some small businesses, particularly family businesses (Masurel, 2007). Moreover, when employees are in favor of

environmental action, involvement in an EC program can serve as a motivator for employees (Masurel, 2007).

In sum, the primary internal barriers and motivators for business are time, financial requirements, and the overall organizational culture. The latter includes owners', managers', and employees' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions around EC. In fact, obtaining EC does not usually require as much time or financial commitment as non-certified businesses typically expect. Thus, it is important to dispel these myths. I now turn to the external factors that can influence a business's interest in EC.

External factors affecting environmental certification.

Industry.

Industry is the specific field of an organization, such as retail, textiles, or agriculture. Specific industries or trade associations can also offer ECs. Essentially, an industry creates its own environmental certification tailored to industry businesses, which usually include producers and manufacturers. This can be indicative of the industry macroculture, which refers to the broad industry culture and the expectations (or lack thereof) to move toward environmental practices. For instance, the presence of a trade or industry association offering an environmental certification would point to an industry macroculture that embraces or at least prioritizes environmental performance (Harris & Crane, 2002). An example is the wood industry, which offers the Forest Stewardship Council certification to indicate that the wood is harvested from a sustainably managed forest and has met other environmentally-related standards.

According to one corporate change model, industries such as the chemical, steel, and mining industries face the highest industry barriers, as these are most resistant to change in environmental practices. In contrast, retail and service industries, for instance, face considerably

lower industry barriers, and are most amenable to improving their environmental practices (Post & Altman, 1994).

Government regulation, & support services.

Government regulations generally act as a motivator for change, though businesses can approach these regulations in different ways. For many businesses, regardless of their level of environmental concern, staying ahead of environmental laws and regulations acts as a motivator to obtain EC (Harris & Crane, 2002; Masurel, 2007). EC has also been found to improve businesses' relations with regulatory groups as a result of their improved compliance with regulations (Michael, Echols, & Bukowski, 2010). The barriers associated with compliance with government regulations occur when businesses feel there are insufficient support services from the government to promote environmental practices (Tilley, 1999).

Customers, stakeholders and competitors.

Customers are a strong driving force for overall business practices, including environmental practices and products offered (New, 1999). The degree of customer demand for an environmentally responsible business and for eco-friendly products can act as a barrier or motivator toward EC (Harris & Crane, 2002), such that if customers are not interested in purchasing green products, this will be a barrier toward EC. When customers value businesses environmental practices, EC has been found to improve public image as well as improve businesses' relations with stakeholders (Michael, Echols, & Bukowski, 2010).

Table 1. Business Barriers and Motivators

	Influential Factors	Barriers	Motivators
Internal Factors	Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Certification. • Cost to implement changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced operating costs. • Avoiding costs of environmental problems.
	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to learn about EC. • Time to train employees. • Time to implement required changes. 	~
	Organizational Culture	<p><i>Employees</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee resistance. <p><i>Owner or Manager Beliefs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment not a business concern. • Small businesses do not impact the environment. • EC requirements are difficult and not worthwhile. <p><i>Owner or Manager Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecoliteracy. • Environmental awareness. • Support services. 	<p><i>Employees</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting workers. • Improved working conditions. • Motivating employees. <p><i>Owner or Manager Beliefs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of moral duty, concern for environment. • EC is beneficial for business. <p><i>Owner or Manager Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecoliteracy. • Environmental awareness. • Support services.
External Factors	Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to pro-environmental change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry certification.
	Customers, Stakeholders, & Competitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of demand for green practices and products. • Competitors not engaging in environmental practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to larger consumer market. • Improved public image. • Improved stakeholder relations. • Demand for green practices and products. • Enhanced competitiveness. • Access to more business partners.
	Government Regulation & Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient government support. • Lack of incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory compliance. • Improved relations with regulatory groups.

In addition to customers, the actions of competitors are very important to businesses. Competitors' environmental practices (or lack thereof) can work as either a barrier or motivator. For instance, in industries where environmental practices are rare, this lack of engagement can act as a barrier to implement an EC (Harris & Crane, 2002; Tilley, 1999). However, lack of environmental action among competitors can also be perceived as an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage by the business seeking EC (Michael, Echols, & Bukowski, 2010). Unfortunately, it is unclear what prompts a business to see an EC as an advantage or as something unnecessary when other businesses are not endorsing it.

Therefore, a variety of internal and external factors influence businesses' environmental practices. Internally, a business must contend with financial requirements, time limitations, and the organizational culture. External factors include the influence of a business's respective industry, government regulations, support services, customers, stakeholders, and competitors. All of these factors have the potential to influence a business's interest in obtaining an EC. Next, I explore businesses' environmental practices through a different lens, that is, businesses in a community context.

Community Context for Business and Environmental Certification

Businesses do not operate in a vacuum; rather, they operate within a context. Small businesses in particular are influenced by a variety of factors such as the local community, politics, history, culture, and consumers (Miller & Besser, 2000). Although the literature on barriers and motivators recognizes the influence of several external factors (e.g., industry culture, regulations, customers, competitors) on EC, the community influence is rarely mentioned, if at all (Vandergeest, 2007). In considering a community-based environmental certification program, however, it is important to take into consideration the community's support for the

program.

“Community” can be conceptualized in many ways. For example, at a macro level it can be based on geography or common interests, and at a micro level on specific groupings within larger communities such as university students or church members (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000). For the purposes of this study, the community is Champaign-Urbana and is defined by geography. This definition of community encompasses community members, businesses, community organizations, government, and educational institutions, among others.

Environmental certifications that are reviewed in the literature are often industry-based and either national or international in scope. One might assume that large-scale ECs would have no need to examine the community context of businesses, as this would not be relevant at a national or international level. However, at least one scholar has raised the concern that existing EC programs are flawed in that they do *not* take into account the communities they impact, and do *not* allow for community participation in the creation of the certification standards (Vandergeest, 2007).

When evaluating the characteristics of successful EC programs, “broad support” is cited as an important criterion. Although this assertion stems from research on industry-specific, national and international certification programs, broad support could be interpreted as encompassing community support (CCIF, 2002). With the exception of the Vandergeest (2007) study that called for community recognition in the creation of EC programs, this is the closest reference to the need for community support for an EC I uncovered in the business literature. Thus, clearly there is a substantial gap in the business literature with respect to community-based EC programs and the relevance of community for these programs. To address this gap, I will be

drawing from the fields of community development, community health, and community psychology.

In various health fields, awareness of an individual's readiness for change is crucial information, and directs how treatment or prevention efforts are conducted. The Transtheoretical Model (TTM; Prochaska, 1979), which incorporates stages of change, is used in a variety of areas from individual psychology (e.g., treating substance abuse) to community health (e.g., increasing mammography screening rates; Prochaska, Redding, Harlow, Rossi, & Velicer, 1994; Spencer, Pagell, & Adams, 2005). The TTM indicates that for individuals to make a behavior change, they must be in the preparation stage. Thus, they must recognize a behavior as problematic, and be willing to, or intend to take action in the near future. Additionally, prevention programs must match the stage of the target audience to be successful (Prochaska, Redding, & Evers, 2002).

Similarly, scholars have posited the notion of community-level readiness. Community readiness can be defined as "the relative level of acceptance of a program, action or other form of decision-making activity that is locality-based" (Donnermeyer, Plested, Edwards, Oetting, & Littlethunder, 1997). Community readiness can be understood as being based on the values and norms of community members, which are most often represented through the actions of community groups and organizations. Although any psychologist can vouch for the challenges inherent in individual change, community readiness has a greater degree of complexity as it refers to change for many people with varying opinions and perceptions. Unlike individual readiness, leadership becomes a crucial factor in decision making for community readiness (Miller, 1990 as cited in Donnermeyer et al.)

There is broad support for the need to conduct a community assessment prior to

implementing community-based programs (Stith et al., 2006). Best practices for implementing a community-based prevention program include that the community be ready for the program, and that the program be appropriate for and specific to the community (Durlap & DuPre, 2008; Stith et al., 2006). Thus, a community's level of readiness to take on a particular problem is crucial to the acceptance and success of a program (Donnermeyer, Plested, Edwards, Oetting, & Littlethunder, 1997). Given the importance of examining community variables to ensure successful implementation of community-based programs, assessing community readiness to address a given problem is a crucial step in the planning process.

In sum, I have reviewed the importance of the community context for businesses, but found that there is no literature on community-based ECs. Therefore, I have drawn from the community psychology and health promotion literature, and have provided evidence that community factors are relevant to the successful implementation of prevention programs.

Theoretical Framework

In this section I review the two models I have chosen to guide this study, their core tenets, and how they are applicable to the present study. Social Marketing is the primary conceptual model used to guide the development of the research questions, and is explained first. Second, the Community Readiness Model is the specific methodology used in the study to fulfill one of the social marketing steps.

Social Marketing.

Social marketing is a program-planning model applied in a variety of fields such as communications, community health, and environmental conservation (Kotler & Lee 2008). The primary objective of the model is to influence behavior change for social good. Social marketing is often compared with, and confused with, consumer marketing, the type of marketing used

throughout the business world to entice consumers to purchase a particular product (Maibach, Rothschild, & Novelli, 2002). Although both are founded on the same principles, there is an essential difference between the two marketing approaches: the ultimate goal of consumer marketing is financial profit whereas the ultimate goal of social marketing is behavior change, typically contributing to a social good. Further, the beneficiaries of consumer marketing are *not* the consumers but the business or organization behind the marketing, whereas the beneficiaries in social marketing are the target group and society as a whole (Kotler & Lee 2008; Maibach, Rothschild, & Novelli, 2002). Given that the IGBA is developing a certification program with the goal of improving local businesses' environmental impact, a social good, this model fits particularly well with the present study.

Social marketing is always centered on behavior change, such as starting, stopping, or modifying a behavior; it can be a one time or infrequent behavior (e.g., purchasing a hybrid or fuel-efficient car) or a repeated behavior (e.g., recycling; Kotler & Lee 2008; Maibach, Rothschild, & Novelli, 2002). For the proposed study, the desired behavior change is having a business elect to be part of the certification program and engage in sustainability practices.

There are some core tenets of social marketing that are essential to its application. An understanding of the target group is crucial. This focus on the target group is often called a consumer-oriented approach and, in theory, should make the process and program culturally sensitive. Part of having a thorough understanding of the target group is also having familiarity with the context in which it operates. This includes knowing what factors are influencing the desired behavior, such as barriers and motivators toward EC. Lastly, social marketing acknowledges that all participants in a project, both collaborators and the target population, have self-interests that must be recognized and met (Maibach, Rothschild, & Novelli, 2002). In this

case, businesses interested in EC will likely prioritize profit over environmental concerns, thus the process of certification must address these needs.

Social marketing outlines specific steps to be used for program planning, implementation, and evaluation. It is comparable to strategic planning within the business world (Bryson, 2004). The program planning process includes 10 steps: describe plan background, purpose, and focus; conduct a situation analysis; select target markets; set objectives and goals; identify competition and target market barriers and motivators; craft a desired position; develop a strategic marketing mix; outline a plan for monitoring and evaluation; establish budgets and funding sources; and complete an implementation plan (Kotler & Lee 2008). As part of the collaboration with the IGBA, I will be focusing on step 5, the identification of specific barriers and motivators that businesses perceive toward EC.

Among the first steps of SM is selecting the target market. This refers to choosing a specific group that will be the target of the program; this is also called the market segmentation process (Kotler & Lee 2008). Group selection can be based on a variety of criteria including demographics, geography, psychological characteristics, behavior, or a combination of these (Kotler & Lee 2008; Maibach, Rothschild, & Novelli, 2002). It is important to select in advance the specific criteria for the target group, as overly broad criteria (e.g., all Champaign-Urbana businesses) will not allow for a thorough enough understanding of the target group. Frequently, programs first target what is commonly referred to as the “low hanging fruit.” In marketing, this refers to the group or population that would be most amenable to the targeted behavior change. For this study, the “low hanging fruit” would be businesses that have a natural interest in business sustainability or have demonstrated voluntary environmental practices.

Depending on how much is already known about the selected group, a variety of

techniques can be used to better understand the factors that influence the group's decision to obtain the EC. These can include conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups (Kotler & Lee, 2008). For this study, individual interviews were used to gather information about the target groups. Although focus groups can also provide a great deal of information, it was mutually decided (between myself and the IGBA) that because business owners are often very short on time, it would be impractical to attempt to get various owners together at the same time. Furthermore, individual interviews would allow me to obtain more in-depth information from each business. Therefore, individual interviews were identified as a preferred method for data collection.

In addition to gathering information on the barriers and motivators that businesses face, SM also emphasizes the importance of understanding the target group's context. Thus, in this study I gathered contextual information specific to the Champaign-Urbana community using the Community Readiness Model.

Community Readiness Model.

The CRM is a community-based, participatory model for change at the community level (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000). Application of the model provides community-specific and culturally-sensitive information on a community's readiness to address a particular issue. The CRM has been applied to assess a wide range of community problems such as intimate partner violence, HIV/AIDS, environmental trauma, environmental health issues (air and water quality), and environmental conservation efforts (litter reduction and recycling; Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000; Oetting, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, & Edwards, 2001).

The CRM is founded on the principle that a successful prevention or intervention

program is the result of collaboration *with* local people, not *for* the people (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000). In this way, the community retains ownership of the issue, and is not dependent on outside researchers.

“Readiness,” as defined by the CRM, is “the degree to which a community is prepared to take action on an issue” (Plested, Edwards, & Jumper-Thurman, 2006). Readiness is an integral component of the model as any program developed must be matched to the readiness of the community (Plested, Edwards, & Jumper-Thurman, 2006). Therefore, the application of the model assists in better understanding the starting point from which to create a new program appropriate to that community’s needs (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000).

The CRM proposes that there are six community readiness dimensions, each representing a different characteristic of a community that will reflect its readiness to address a particular issue. Taken together, these dimensions will allow the community and researchers to determine the community’s stage of readiness. Following is a description of the CRM dimensions (based on the work of Plested, Edwards, & Jumper-Thurman, 2006) along with examples of how they apply to the current study.

- a) Existing community efforts: refers to any efforts to address the issue such as policies or community programs. Examples might include local level regulations on businesses’ environmental practices or existing support services for sustainable business practices. If there was a local EC program in place, this would be considered an existing community effort.
- b) Community knowledge of the efforts: refers to community members’ awareness of efforts (if any exist), and to the accessibility of the local efforts or initiatives to different

segments of the population. This dimension attempts to capture the community's overall awareness of any existing efforts described in a), and ascertain if there are any population-specific limitations to the efforts. For instance, if a local EC did exist, but was only available for large businesses, then this would be an accessibility issue for small or medium businesses.

- c) Leadership: refers to the degree of support community leaders offer for the issue. Examples of community leaders might be members of the County Board or the Mayor. These leaders can show their support in a variety of ways, including participation in community discussion forums or by modeling green practices.
- d) Community climate: refers to the general community attitude toward the issue. For example, this dimension would uncover the community's attitude toward businesses' environmental impact. Community members may not think it is an issue at all, or may have strong concerns about it.
- e) Community knowledge about the issue: this dimension seeks to uncover the motives for the community's attitudes (previous dimension) by assessing knowledge. Thus, it refers to the community's knowledge about the causes, consequences, and other pertinent information related to the issue in question. For this study, it would be important to know whether community members are knowledgeable about consequences when businesses are not environmentally responsible, such as environmental damage, pollution, and negative health outcomes.
- f) Resources related to the issue: refers to the availability of local resources such as time, money, and people to address the issue. Assuming that there is community awareness and concern about businesses' environmental impact, it would be important to determine if

there are people willing to volunteer in this effort, and if there are funds available for improving business practices.

Consistent with the CRM, each of the dimensions can be rated independently and subsequently evaluated together to determine a community's overall stage of readiness. There are a total of nine incremental stages of community readiness to address an issue. The CRM provides recommended strategies for change that can be applied at each stage. Thus, the community's stage of readiness provides critical information as it informs the community and researchers about the type of intervention necessary to prompt change and bring the community to the next readiness level. Next, I describe the stages of readiness and corresponding sample interventions using business sustainability as an example.

Stage 1: No awareness.

In the first stage, there is no awareness or recognition of the issue as a problem. In some cases (though it is rare), the issue may legitimately not be a problem in the community. For the present study, given that climate change is a world-wide problem, no awareness of businesses' impact on the environment is considered a result of a lack of awareness rather than an indication that the problem does not exist. For a community at this stage, the primary goal is to raise awareness. This can be accomplished, for example, through individual visits and conversations with community leaders to bring the issue to their attention.

Stage 2: Denial.

At this stage the issue may be recognized as a problem but there is little or no concern that it is an issue for the present community. For instance, the community may recognize that businesses have an impact on the environment, but may think that because Champaign-Urbana is a smaller community, that the businesses' impact on the environment is negligible. The

suggested strategy is to raise awareness of how the issue affects the local community, and to focus first on groups that may have some awareness or interest in the issue. Collaborating with local outreach agencies, media, and educational sources to raise awareness is recommended. Additionally, highlighting local examples of how the issue affects the community is important.

Stage 3: Vague awareness.

A community is in the third stage when there is recognition of the issue but little or nothing is being done to address it and motivation for change is lacking. Again, here there is recognition of businesses' impact on the environment, however it may not be given priority for a variety of reasons. At this stage the goal of an intervention is to raise awareness about what the community *can* do. Dissemination of information should continue but spread to groups that are unrelated to the issue. Small informal events should also be organized to bring people together and encourage discussion about possible solutions.

Stage 4: Preplanning.

In the preplanning stage there is acknowledgement that action must be taken to address the issue, and there may be some small efforts underway, but these are generally diffuse and lack focus. If there were groups actively working toward improving businesses' environmental impact, they would not be well organized or would have little community support. The recommended strategy for this stage is to raise awareness of tangible solutions to deal with the issue. This entails engaging community leaders, revisiting existing efforts and checking their progress, and increasing media exposure of the issue. Focus groups can also be conducted to continue developing community-based strategies to deal with the issue.

Stage 5: Preparation.

At stage five, leaders begin to actively plan and focus on decision-making, they seek out

resources, and the community shows support. Thus, there would be clear support for improving businesses' environmental practices from community leaders. At this stage, the recommended strategy to encourage continued forward movement on the issue is to gather information for planning of efforts. Examples of information gathering include conducting surveys to produce local data that can guide intervention efforts. Public forums should be established to continue a community dialog, and media efforts should feature community leaders supporting the issue.

Stage 6: Initiation.

In the initiation stage, activity exists beyond the planning stage. A program specifically addressing business sustainability may have been started and there is generally enthusiasm among leaders. Staff are actively being trained, and there is generally little or no resistance from the community. The goal at this stage is to continue to provide information to the community and gather information on possible gaps in efforts. Interviews with community members can be conducted to identify ways to improve existing efforts. Additionally, planners should seek out community resources as well as funding opportunities. Lastly, training of professionals and para-professionals to deal specifically with the issue should begin.

Stage 7: Stabilization.

A community in the stabilization stage features new programs that have ongoing support of local leaders and administrators. The program or activity is stable, and there is the presence of trained or experienced staff. However, at this stage there are no consistent data collection efforts or evaluations being conducted. Stabilization implies that a program to support businesses' sustainability efforts is running and operational, but may still be in the development phase. The goal of this stage is to stabilize the developing effort and to maintain support for the issue. Toward this end, community events can be planned, continuing education seminars and

workshops can be offered, and media coverage of the developing efforts should continue. Evaluation efforts of the program also need to be implemented which may include meetings to review progress and modify existing strategies.

Stage 8: Confirmation and Expansion

At the confirmation and expansion stage, the program or activities are clearly established, the community is comfortable with the services offered, expansion is supported, evaluative data are obtained on a regular basis, new resources are being sought out, and new commitments made. For Champaign-Urbana to be in this stage, there must be some form of sustainable business program in place that is fully operational and either has funding or is self-sustaining. In addition, the program would have ongoing data collection that would inform how to improve the program. The goal at this stage is to expand or enhance the services that deal with the issue. A comprehensive database related to the issue can be established, and a list of local programs published. More broadly, policy changes can be initiated with the support of local leader and government officials.

Stage 9: Professionalization

The final stage of professionalization entails a high level of community ownership in which the community is knowledgeable about the issue, including its causes, consequences, and local relevance. Ongoing evaluation guides necessary changes and adjustments. Relating the stage to sustainability efforts, local businesses would be held to a high standard of environmental responsibility, and there would be ongoing measures of environmental impact such as energy consumption, water usage, and waste generation. These measures would allow businesses to identify areas they need to improve as well as areas in which they are excelling. The goal at this last stage is to maintain momentum around the issue and continue growth as needed. Long term

and diverse funding sources need to be established, and training of professionals can be made more advanced. Evaluation of program progress should continue and outcome data of the program should be tracked for grant requests.

In sum, the CRM is a flexible model that has been applied to diverse problems. The only criteria for its use are that the community is clearly defined and the problem is addressed at the community level with its members' collaboration. By applying the CRM, researchers and collaborators are able to identify the community's readiness stage and generate a relevant plan for how to move the community forward in change. Next I explain how the two conceptual models just described, SM and CRM, will be integrated for this study.

Integration of Models

My use of SM and CRM is unique in that I am applying the models to the issue of business sustainability, and in that I am integrating both models in the examination of a phenomenon. Although SM and CRM are complementary models, I found only two empirical articles describing their theoretical compatibility (Kelly et al., 2003; Slater, Kelly, & Edwards, 2000). Further, I was unable to find any articles on their applied use together. In this section, I explain how these models were adapted slightly for the purposes of this study. I also begin an analysis of the compatibility of these models on a theoretical level, which will be continued in the results section from an applied perspective.

SM and CRM share some fundamental elements that allow them to work together. First, and perhaps most importantly, both models have change as their primary goal. SM seeks specific behavioral change, and CRM is applied to help create change at the community level. Second, both models allow for a focus on community. The CRM is focused on community change, and although SM was not intended to be community specific, it can be if the selected target group is

based on a region or community. Lastly, SM and CRM are amenable to qualitative modes of inquiry. CRM specifically indicates the use of interviews, and SM also recommends use of interviews, to thoroughly understand the group of interest.

One adaptation of SM for the current study is that I focused on specific steps of SM rather than applying the entire program-planning model. Consistent with SM's core principles, I have identified a specific group of interest to focus the research on. Furthermore, it is from SM that I draw on the importance of understanding the influential factors (i.e., barriers and motivators) businesses perceive to EC.

I have also made an adaptation to address a point of contention between theories. The CRM incorporates and emphasizes empowerment of the participants. Social Marketing, on the other hand, does not have any empowerment elements and tends to be more hierarchical in its language, such as describing participants as the "target group." This type of language reflects a divide between the researcher and the participants that is inconsistent with the community-based and collaborative approach used for this research. Thus, this was addressed by deemphasizing the more hierarchical features of SM and focusing on principles of CRM that emphasize collaboration.

In sum, to conceptualize and address the problem of business sustainability I am drawing on Social Marketing and the Community Readiness Model. Both models are complementary in theory, yet there was no identifiable research that indicates how they work together in practice. In addition, the use of SM and CRM to better understand community-based EC and barriers and motivators to certification is a novel application. Given the importance of community in this study, next I provide a brief overview of the Champaign-Urbana community demographics as they relate to the present study.

Champaign-Urbana Community Profile

Champaign County consists of 22 cities or villages with a total population of slightly more than 190,000 residents. The cities of Champaign, Urbana, and the Village of Savoy are the focus of this study. They account for approximately 65% of Champaign County's total population (see Table 2).

Table 2. County and city population statistics.

Location	Population
Champaign County	190,260
Champaign City	75,254
Urbana City	40,550
Savoy Village	6,981

(Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, 2009)

The county population is evenly divided among men and women; however, the 15 - 24 age group is the largest, accounting for approximately 25% of the population. This is most likely due to the large student population at the University of Illinois. Also likely due to the University's influence, the population has an overall high education level, with 19% of the population having more than a bachelor's degree (Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, 2009), compared to the national average of 10% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The University is the largest employer in the county, with over 10,000 employees. Carle Physician Group is the second largest employer with approximately 6,000 employees. In terms of employees by sector, retail trade businesses have almost 10,000 employees, as does the office and restaurant sector.

In Champaign County there are over 4,000 businesses; 15% ($n = 666$) of these are retail and 12% ($n = 505$) are in accommodation and food services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). A breakdown of the distribution of the number of employees is shown in Table 3. Consistent with national data, 99% of Champaign County businesses are considered a small business by the U.S. government.

Table 3. Distribution of number of employees.

No. of Employees	No. of Businesses (%)
1 - 9	2,937 (68%)
10 - 49	1,130 (26%)
50 - 99	156 (3.5%)
100 - 249	74 (1.5%)
250 - 1000+	33 (1%)

Rationale and Purpose of the Study

There is research addressing the barriers and motivators to environmental certification of businesses. However, given the vast majority of ECs are national or international, their generalizability to community-based ECs is unknown. Even research on large-scale EC programs is limited, and scholars in the field call for a more thorough understanding of the factors that influence businesses' implementation of EC programs and voluntary environmental practices (Schaper, 2002). Most of the studies are industry specific and rarely applicable to small business concerns. Further, there is virtually no research on community-based EC programs, and few references to the importance of community readiness for such programs. The fields of community health and community development supplement this gap by recognizing the importance of community readiness for the success of community programs. However, the

concept of community readiness has never been applied to environmental certification for businesses.

This study has two objectives: (a) To better understand the relation between community context and the willingness of businesses to embrace sustainable practices. This will be accomplished by measuring Champaign-Urbana's level of community readiness to support EC and by exploring the specific factors that influence a business's decision to be certified. The latter objective will support the development of the IGBA's EC program by providing them with community-specific information to help tailor their program. (b) To explore the compatibility of SM and CRM in their joint application toward understanding businesses' sustainability practices. These models have yet to be applied to business sustainability practices. This theoretical exploration contributes to the literature and strengthens the transferability of the methods for use in other community-based sustainability initiatives.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Research Design

Minimal literature exists on the relation between a community and local businesses' sustainability practices; thus, a qualitative research design is appropriate for the present study. Qualitative work is particularly useful when little is known about the subject and exploratory research is needed (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & McCormack-Steinmetz, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, qualitative work recognizes that multiple realities exist, and prioritizes understanding others' experiences, as opposed to the goal of predicting behavior more common in quantitative studies. This study's focus is on the former, as there is not yet enough relevant literature to attempt behavior prediction.

The Community Readiness Model resonates with the goal of understanding others and extends this notion by emphasizing collaboration with community members. The CRM values the experiential knowledge of those committed to the issue within a given community as well as community members overall. To gain a deeper understanding of business sustainability at the local level as is sought by this study, the ideal approach is through dialogue. This allows the respondents and collaborators the most freedom to share their experiences. Thus, in line with CRM and the goals of this study, individual interviews are the primary mode of data collection.

Also consistent with CRM principles, this study was developed in collaboration with the IGBA. Here, I briefly describe the evolution of this project. During initial conversations between an IGBA board member and myself to explore ideas for a research project, the lack of an environmental certification program that could motivate local businesses was discussed as a community issue. At the time, the IGBA was in the process of developing such a program, and

the staff felt it was important to incorporate research elements into their program wherever possible. After many conversations over a period of several months, we agreed that exploring community readiness for sustainable business practices, as well as the specific business barriers and motivators to EC, would be beneficial to the IGBA and would be an attractive focus for my dissertation. The IGBA made clear that the methods for the study should be of my choosing; nevertheless, as ideas on how best to address the research questions developed, I would update an IGBA representative to be certain the direction of the project was still in line with the IGBA's goals as well. Thus, this project has been community-based and collaborative from its conception.

Before the implementation of this study, approval from the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board was obtained. This study was divided into two phases in order to gain an understanding of business sustainability issues at both the community level and the individual or business level. In Phase I, I interviewed key informants (i.e., community and business leaders) using the Community Readiness Assessment. In Phase II, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with local business representatives to uncover the specific barriers and motivators they perceive toward obtaining an environmental certification.

Researcher's Role

Consistent with qualitative work in which the researcher's reflexivity is an important element, I will now briefly describe my personal role in this project. I have a strong interest in, and concern over, sustainability issues. The notion of the three pillars that define sustainability is consistent with my beliefs and values. I believe that a balance between the environment, society, and economics is crucial to our well being. Furthermore, I conceptualize climate change not only as a global environmental problem, but as a social justice issue as well. Climate change has

affected and will continue to disproportionately affect some of the most vulnerable populations, children and ethnic minorities. Minority ethnic groups in the U.S. are more likely to live, work, and go to school in areas contaminated with toxins and where environmental hazards are more prevalent (Legot, London, & Shandra, 2010; Pastor, Sadd, & Hipp, 2001). Many of the poor around the world will be displaced due to rising sea levels, and the overall health of countless people including future generations will be at risk as access to clean uncontaminated water and soil become more problematic each day (World Health Organization, 2003). I harbor no illusions that my work will directly influence any of these large scale environmental problems, but I do believe that individuals and communities can take responsibility for their own actions and decisions, and in so doing create healthier communities around the world. I believe research can be a powerful tool for change, and that this can be my small, yet meaningful contribution. Thus, my goal is to conduct a study that will yield results that have practical implications for, and contribute to, the promotion of sustainability efforts in the community.

Phase I

Participants.

A total of eight business and community leaders were interviewed for the community readiness assessment. Initially, I contacted a total of 12 individuals, yet 4 individuals did not believe they were qualified to complete the interview and referred me to others. The remaining 8 individuals completed interviews between June and August 2010. The average length of a completed interview was approximately 45 minutes (range = 30 to 75 minutes). Interviewees included business sustainability leaders, local government officials engaged in sustainability issues, a University of Illinois sustainability leader, and a local media representative. The inclusion criteria for this phase were that the interviewee be a community leader, business

sustainability leader, or that the individual be knowledgeable about the Champaign-Urbana business community overall.

Measure.

The *Community Readiness Assessment* (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000), is an interview guide intended to be used with key informants; these are generally community leaders but can also include individuals knowledgeable about the issue in question. This method has been found to generate comparable information to community surveys, thus the interviews save time and resources without sacrificing quality of information (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000; Oetting, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, & Edwards, 2001). The CRA has been applied to diverse issues from substance abuse to environmental health and conservation efforts (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000). Consistent with the CRM, the CRA assesses 6 dimensions: community efforts, community knowledge of the efforts, leadership, community climate, community knowledge about the issue, and resources related to the issue (Plested, Edwards, & Jumper-Thurman, 2006).

The assessment contains a total of 36 questions that the interviewer tailors to focus on the issue under investigation. The majority of the questions are open ended, such as the following: “Please describe the efforts that are available in your community to address a business’s environmental sustainability.” In addition, a few questions require the interviewee to rate a particular issue. An example of a question that requires the interviewee to provide a rating is: “Using a scale from 1 to 10, how much of a concern is this issue to the leadership in your community (with 1 being not at all and 10 being of great concern)? Please explain.” Thus, even rating questions require the interviewee to provide an explanation and elaborate.

Procedure.

Consistent with recommended procedures for the CRA, purposeful sampling methods were used (Plested, Edwards, & Jumper-Thurman, 2006). I developed a list of potential participants based on organizations or government bodies that would most likely have individuals knowledgeable about business sustainability (i.e., Champaign County Chamber of Commerce, local Business Associations). At a planning meeting with the IGBA, the original list was shared and they provided possible contact information for individuals in the organizations on the list. The IGBA also provided ideas for leaders to contact who were not originally on the list and were well known for their leadership role in business sustainability. Thus, the final list of potential interviewees was a composite of names generated by the IGBA and myself.

I contacted potential participants by phone to request their participation. Upon their acceptance to be interviewed, we scheduled a date, time, and location. Most interviews took place in offices, and some took place in a private area of a café. At the interview, I provided interviewees with a brief verbal explanation of the information on the informed consent (e.g., a summary of the purpose of the study, reminded participants of their right to decline answering any question they did not feel comfortable answering). Interviewees were also reminded that the research was a collaboration with the IGBA but that the information they provided would remain confidential. Time was allowed for the participants to read over the informed consent and ask any questions. Upon signing the informed consent, the interviewees were given a copy for their records, the digital recorder was turned on and the interview began. Throughout the interview I took notes on participants' responses. After the interviews were completed, participants were thanked for their time and contribution of knowledge, and were informed that once the interview was transcribed they would receive a copy of the transcript for their review.

Scoring.

Analysis of the CRA included several steps, and followed the specific instructions denoted by its authors to determine the stage of readiness. This included two reviewers (myself and a collaborator) independently conducting a thorough reading of the interview transcripts. The collaborator was well qualified to work on the project through her previous experience working with the CRM. Transcripts were analyzed using an anchored rating scale to assign a score to each dimension, for each interview. An anchored rating scale features several anchor points with descriptions attached to each point. The CRA rating scale ranges from 1 (*lowest level of readiness*) to 9 (*highest level or readiness*) with points specific to each dimension. In deciding on the rating for a dimension, each rating was considered beginning with the lowest rating. If the description was fully met, the applicability of the next rating was considered. At the low end of the readiness scale, the first three consecutive anchored statements for Dimension A (community efforts) are:

- (1) No awareness of the need for efforts to address the issue.
- (2) No efforts addressing the issue.
- (3) A few individuals recognize the need to initiate some type of effort, but there is no immediate motivation to do anything.

I will use these points in the following example to illustrate how the ratings were applied.

When rating an interview on Dimension A, existing community efforts, a participant indicated that the issue of business sustainability was recognized by the community, but that no programs or efforts currently exist, nor were there plans to begin developing efforts. For the dimension on existing community efforts, this interview would be rated a 2. It would not be given a 1 or a 3 as neither statement fits the participant's description. Proceeding in this way each dimension is rated for each interview.

Scores for each dimension are then averaged across interviewees. For instance, for dimension A all the scores for the 8 interviewees would be added and then averaged by dividing by 8. In turn, the averages for each dimension are then summed and averaged across the number of interviewees to arrive at an overall community readiness score. Thus, all the interviewees' responses contribute to determining the community's stage of readiness, which ranges from 1 – 9. A step-by-step explanation of how the analysis procedure was carried out is provided next.

After the interviews were transcribed, the first read through involved taking notes, highlighting quotes that stood out, and labeling the content according to dimension. For instance, if a participant was describing a specific program that focused on business sustainability, this would be labeled Dimension A for existing community efforts. A second read through involved assigning a rating to each dimension. The same procedure was followed independently by a collaborator, as recommended by the developers of the CRA. The collaborator and I then met to discuss each transcript. For each dimension, I gave my rating first and explained my rationale for the rating using quotes from the transcript. If we agreed upon the rating, we then moved on to the next dimension. If my collaborator had a different rating, she would explain the rationale for her rating using quotes as support. We would further discuss the dimension in light of each other's reasons and further explored the transcript for supporting evidence. We came to a consensus based on our discussions. We proceeded in this way for all the dimensions and for each interview, until all the transcripts were analyzed.

Having a collaborator in the data analysis process provided numerous opportunities for peer debriefing. Through my collaborator's questions I was able to check my assumptions and biases. I was able to describe and process impressions I had from interviewees. Lastly, member checks were conducted by returning transcripts to participants through email or phone,

depending on their preference. Participants were asked to verify that they were satisfied with the content of the interviews. Three participants made minor changes but the majority felt the transcript reflected what they intended to say.

Phase II

Participants.

Consistent with SM principles, a single business demographic should be studied to gain a thorough understanding of the factors that influence the group of interest. The group focused on for this study was businesses that would have a natural interest in a green certification, namely the “low hanging fruit.” This demographic was divided into two subgroups. The first subgroup was composed of $n = 8$ businesses from the IGBA pilot certification program (this group will be referred to as IGBA businesses). These businesses were either already certified or in the process of obtaining certification. The second subgroup of businesses were not in the pilot program but were chosen based on three possible criteria: (a) the business had demonstrated an interest in certification through contact with the IGBA, (b) the business was considered a “green” business because of the products sold, or (c) the business displayed easily visible green practices (i.e., recycling, encouraged conservation, used organic products). The second group of businesses ($n = 8$) is denoted as non-IGBA businesses.

For inclusion in the study, both IGBA and non-IGBA businesses had to meet 3 inclusion criteria: (a) the business is located in Champaign County, (b) the company conducts business in the restaurant, retail, or office business sectors, and (c) the business appoints an interviewee who is an owner, manager, or a staff member knowledgeable about the businesses’ green practices.

The types of businesses that participated were retail, office, restaurant/bar or restaurant/café, for profit and non-profit; all were locally owned and operated. These are small

businesses, as the number of employees ranged from 2 to 46 ($M = 17.38$; $SD = 13.73$). Time in the community ranged from 0 years (the business had just opened) to 59 years ($M = 24.16$; $SD = 18.03$). The interviewees were predominantly owners and managers ($n = 14$); however, some were staff members with a high degree of knowledge about their business's green practices and certification interests ($n = 2$). Some businesses were already certified with the IGBA ($n = 6$), whereas others were in the process of being certified ($n = 2$), interested in being certified ($n = 4$), had considered being certified ($n = 3$), or were not interested in being certified ($n = 1$).

Measures.

The *Business Interview Guide for IGBA businesses* (see Appendix A), was used to interview business representatives who participated in the IGBA pilot study. I chose a semi-structured interview guide as this allows sufficient structure to limit the interview to business sustainability, yet allows the flexibility to ask probing questions based on an interviewee's response. In this way, more meaning and depth of knowledge can be obtained from the interviews. I designed the questions for the semi-structured interview guide based on SM principles, IGBA recommendations, and findings from the literature review. The interview guide contained 19 questions and took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The questions focused on internal and external barriers and motivators toward EC. The interview began with broader questions on the meaning of environmental certification, such as: "When you hear the term 'green business' or 'environmentally sustainable business' what comes to mind?" The questions then focused on understanding the factors that influenced a business's interest in EC. For example, a question on motivating factors was: "What are the main reasons your business was interested in the green business certification?"

The final question was a compiled list of the possible factors that may influence

businesses' engagement in EC, based on findings from an in-depth literature review. I found that what determined a barrier and motivator as such depended largely on the business's context. I also found great variability in the factors businesses reported to be particularly influential of their interest in certification. Thus, for the last section, interviewees were read a list of factors that were the most prevalent barriers and motivators in the literature. The business representative was asked if the factor was influential to them in their decision to become certified, and to explain briefly. In this way, a factor could be considered non-influential, influential as a motivator or barrier, or both a motivator and barrier.

The *non-IGBA business interview guide* (see Appendix B), was used for non-IGBA businesses (i.e., the businesses that were not in the pilot program). This interview guide was almost the same as the IGBA business interview guide with two differences. After the questions on the meaning of a green business, I provided a brief explanation of a green business certificate, to confirm that we were discussing the same type of certificate, and to clarify any confusion in case the business representative had no previous knowledge on ECs. The second difference was that instead of asking for the factors that influenced their *decision* to be certified, business representatives were asked which factors influence their current level of *interest* in certification.

Procedure.

The IGBA and I collaborated on a list of potential business interviewees, consistent with a community-based approach and SM recommendations for purposeful sampling. The IGBA provided me with a list of 11 pilot businesses that had been most responsive and shown the most participation in their program. Of these I was able to coordinate interviews with 8 businesses. The other three businesses I was either unable to reach or had conflicting schedules and was unable to coordinate an interview. In addition, the IGBA provided me with a list of 4 businesses

that had shown interest in future certification. All of these businesses were contacted and interviewed. The IGBA also expressed an interest in eventually talking with local café owners. Thus, I emailed and called several of them, and one was willing to be interviewed. The remaining 3 businesses were selected based on a business's outward appearance of being interested in green practices, such as having signs encouraging recycling and selling organic products.

Interviews were conducted in August and September 2010 with businesses located in Champaign, Urbana, and Savoy. Potential interviewees were contacted via phone and upon accepting to be participants, a date, time and location for the interview was set. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes (range = 25 to 60 minutes), and all took place in a private area of the business locale (e.g., office, empty break room). The interview procedures were the same as those followed for the CRA interviews.

Data Analysis.

I analyzed the business interviews using theme analysis. A theme is defined as a meaningful statement that is found in all or most of the data (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & McCormack-Steinmetz, 1991). Consistent with SM principles, the question topics correspond to the thematic categories used to organize the data. Examples of these categories were: meaning of business sustainability, meaning of EC, internal barriers to EC, external barriers to EC. In addition to the predetermined categories, analysis also included attentiveness to the possibility of new categories that emerged from the data. The content of the interviews were treated as a lens into the business representatives' world, thus a particular topic did not have to be recurring for it to be considered important. Rather, any possible influencing factor was considered important, as it was a part of large spectrum of factors that may influence a business. Understandably, some

factors were more prevalent than others, but it was important in the analysis not to discount a factor simply because it was not mentioned often.

The procedure I used for analyzing the data was based on Rubin and Rubin's (2005) guidelines for qualitative data analysis, and was as follows. During the interviews I took general notes; after completing the interviews I wrote analytic memos (i.e., initial impressions and insights). In my first reading of the transcripts I highlighted concepts and themes, and noted possible interpretations, thoughts and questions. A second reader was then given the transcripts as well as my notes. The second reader was the same research collaborator that worked on the analysis of the CRA, thus she was familiar with the study, and had had experience analyzing qualitative data. The second reader added her own highlights, notes, and questions to the transcripts. With the second reader acting as an auditor, we would discuss any unresolved questions or topics of interest. This process allowed me to check my individual biases, drew my attention to themes I may have missed, and questioned any assumptions I may have made. This interactive process also allowed for a more in-depth analysis as our discussion helped clarify ideas and possible themes.

Next, I categorized all the highlighted concepts and themes from each transcript. There were both pre-determined topics based on the interview questions, and new topics and themes that arose from the interviews. Both were considered equally important in the analytic process. Last, I narrated the results, further refining the themes and their categories.

Member Checks & Dissemination of Results

Once complete, the results section was shared in a meeting with IGBA board and staff members as well as emailed to IGBA and non-IGBA business participants, to confirm their views were accurately represented in the final analysis. In the meeting with the IGBA board and

staff members (some of whom had participated in the study), attendees showed great interest in the project. I presented the results in a PowerPoint format, first providing a 15-minute overview of the findings, followed by a discussion on the points that were of most interest. Those in attendance noted that the findings were consistent with what they had been experiencing in the community. Moreover, they felt that the results helped explain some of the business owners' attitudes and behaviors regarding certification. After the conclusion of the meeting, several board and staff members stayed behind to continue discussing the findings, further indicating their interest in the results and investment in the study.

An effort was also made to obtain feedback from other participants. A quarter of IGBA and non-IGBA business participants were emailed results, with the instruction that if no response was received within 10 days this would indicate their approval of the results. None of the participants responded. I posit a few reasons for this lack of response. Usually in a qualitative study, there is a process that allows for rapport building with participants, such as having multiple interviews or extended time discussing the topic of interest. However, for this study the participants were business owners and managers with extensive time constraints. Many agreed to participate because of the short time commitment asked of them. The topic was not personal in nature, but rather was practically oriented and focused on the barriers and motivators they perceived toward certification. Thus, for this study, although there was some time for rapport building at the beginning of the interviews, less time was necessary and available than in most qualitative studies. Nevertheless, participants' responses felt genuine, and their relaxed demeanor as well as the light tone of the interviews indicated a degree of trust and comfort with the questions and with myself as the interviewer. In sum, the first possible reason for a lack of a

response from participants was likely due to time constraints, and not a lack of rapport with me as the researcher and interviewer.

I also note that in many qualitative studies, participants may have a stake in the information being collected. In this study, the IGBA board and staff had a stake in the findings as it had implications for how their organization was run. Consistent with this perception, they readily agreed to meet, attend a presentation highlighting the results, and provide feedback on the project. However, IGBA and non-IGBA businesses who participated in the study provided information that had few direct benefits for them, as the meetings were geared toward helping to clarify what makes business owners interested in pursuing an EC. Thus, a second reason that these businesses may not have responded to the request for feedback was that they might not have felt that reading the results was a priority, especially given the many priorities they noted during the interviews. Lastly, given the instructions in the email, some participants may not have felt that any changes were required, and understood that not responding was a legitimate form of showing their satisfaction with the findings.

Trustworthiness of the Data

In this section I describe the measures taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. Some of the measures were referenced in earlier sections of this chapter, but here they are presented more thoroughly. The section is organized and draws on the parallel criteria for rigor in qualitative work described by Lincoln and Guba (1985; i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) and expanded on in more recent literature (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Morrow & Smith, 2000).

Credibility, or the rigor of a study, refers to attempting to most accurately reconstruct the reality presented by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was addressed on multiple

levels, through the lens of participants, through an external lens of a peer, and from my own perspective as the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In terms of methodology, multiple interviews were used which acts as a form of triangulation of the data. A peer debriefer was used as a sounding board for ideas, to check assumptions, and to question my interpretations. Disconfirming evidence was sought throughout the analysis, as I actively sought out data that would disconfirm a particular theory, assumption, or interpretation. Member checks were conducted throughout the research process. During interviews I used clarifying questions and summarized the participants' ideas and experiences to confirm an accurate understanding of their ideas. After the interviews, member checks were used by providing participants a copy of the transcripts and allowing them to make any edits they thought appropriate. A quarter of IGBA and non-IGBA participants were given the results section to confirm that the analysis was an accurate reflection of their experiences and beliefs. Lastly, results were shared and discussed with IGBA board and staff members. Researcher reflexivity was also used throughout the study, and a section in this chapter is dedicated to my role in the study (Morrow & Smith, 2000).

Transferability of the findings, in contrast to generalizability, is best addressed in qualitative work by providing rich descriptions such that other researchers may decide if the results are applicable elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rich descriptions are provided not only of the content of the interviews but also on the research context, participants, and processes used.

The dependability criterion emphasizes that a study should be repeatable as much as possible. This criterion was addressed by keeping a record of the procedures used throughout the study. Lastly, the criterion of confirmability deals with managing the researcher's subjectivity. This was addressed through researcher reflexivity as well as through peer debriefing throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow & Smith, 2000).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this section I address each of the research questions in turn, moving from questions with a narrower scope and ending with broader, conceptual questions. This progression will allow me to deconstruct the content of the interviews into smaller and more manageable units that represent ideas, themes, and meanings. I then use these smaller units to reconstruct a representation of the Champaign-Urbana community, forming a more holistic picture of the community that is still based on the experiences of each participant. First, I describe the results of the CRA; second, I discuss the factors that influence a business's decision to be certified; third, I address how the community context is linked to businesses' willingness to embrace sustainable practices (Research Question 1), and lastly I discuss how the theories used (i.e., SM and CRM), allowed for a richer exploration of businesses' readiness to embrace sustainability practices (Research Question 2).

Community Readiness Assessment

The findings from the CRA interviews offer a unique vantage point of the community, as the interviews were conducted with community leaders that are most in contact with the topic of business sustainability. In this section I will first provide a group profile of the participants that will give context to the results that follow.

CRA group profile.

The tone of the interviews was generally professional but relaxed. Most interviews took place in offices or meeting rooms, with a few in quiet cafés. Although in a couple of the interviews the tone was more subdued, during the majority of the interviews there was intermittent light laughter throughout.

The time that participants had spent living in Champaign-Urbana ranged widely. Half of the participants had lived in the community for 4 - 7 years, whereas the other half included individuals who had spent 30 years or more in the area. Despite these differences, all participants described themselves as highly connected to, and active members of, the Champaign-Urbana community.

The CRA participants held a variety of positions allowing them to be knowledgeable about business sustainability in the community. Some participants worked directly with the IGBA, whereas others were city and county government officials (some held sustainability-related positions and others had a publicly known interest in the topic). Interviewees also included a university member familiar with both the community at large and sustainability issues, a member of the local media, and a leader of a sustainability community group. Several of the participants had experience in both the private and public sectors.

Participants' beliefs about a variety of the topics addressed in the CRA appeared to be tied to their individual experiences, such as their involvement and interaction with community groups and resources. For instance, one participant who provided markedly different responses from other interviewees was highly knowledgeable about sustainability at the overall community level, yet had not had any experiences with sustainability as it applied to local businesses. Therefore, although he felt sustainability was an important topic, he did not believe the community gave business sustainability sufficient importance, as he was not aware of any groups or resources available to address the issue. All other participants had some interaction with existing or developing efforts, and therefore were able to comment on them.

Next, I present the results of the Community Readiness Assessment for Champaign-Urbana's business community. For each dimension I describe the results of the interviews, I

provide the average readiness score across participants for that particular dimension (from 1 - *lowest level of readiness* to 9 - *highest level or readiness*), and I briefly explain what the stage means in light of the results presented.

Dimension A: Existing community efforts.

Participants described a variety of community efforts and programs available to help promote green business practices. These ranged from utility incentive programs to City Action Plans that incorporate business sustainability. The most frequently cited resource for businesses was the IGBA, a certification program specifically designed to help businesses implement more sustainable practices. One interviewee explained: “There’s the Illinois Green Business Association. They’re kind of the lead in ...looking for [business] sustainability. I see Illinois Green Business Association and it’s ...a community based effort.” However, many interviewees commented that the greatest weakness of this program was that it was still very new; at the time of the interviews, the program had been in operation for approximately one year, and during this time the focus was on piloting the program.

Another program mentioned by participants that was still in development was Champaign County Net (CCnet). CCnet was described as focusing on sustainability in the community at large, and did not cater specifically to business sustainability. It is a web-based resource with intermittent discussion forums on various sustainability topics. An interviewee who had participated in the CCnet forums explained why this resource was valuable:

The CCnet group is building their discussion where they just have...informal discussion about what’s going on and I see that as kind of the key. You know, information sharing...people just come and say yeah we’re working on this, what do you think about this? How can we collaborate? What can we do to share ideas? We haven’t made a lot of

progress but people really enjoy it because they get to hear what's going on. It gives them ideas... Information sharing is really the first step that's kind of the key to everything.

Although this participant felt that resources for businesses were limited, he believed information sharing was critical in deepening awareness and knowledge about the issue. Further, he saw it as one of the first steps toward greater action and toward creating momentum around sustainability issues broadly. He explained that ultimately this momentum would begin to incorporate businesses.

Other resources described had been in place for longer periods of time but focused on only one element of green business. Two utility companies were described as having business incentive programs: Ameren's Act on Energy program and Illinois American Water's program. Interviewees indicated that both of these offered incentives for businesses that reduced their energy use or water use, but interviewees could say little more about the programs and felt that they were not promoted well. The Smart Energy Design Assistance Center (SEDAC), a University-affiliated resource that provides free energy audits to businesses to help improve their energy efficiency, was also cited as a business resource. However, only interviewees who had directly worked with SEDAC knew of it.

At the governmental level, several efforts related to business sustainability were described. One participant familiar with Urbana city government described Urbana's City Action Plan, which featured several sections specifically on sustainability and encouraged green practices for both residents and businesses. Another participant familiar with Champaign city government highlighted that the city of Champaign requires developers to incorporate sustainable elements in their design of buildings, roads, and parking areas. This participant also

described several energy-related grant initiatives available to businesses. The participant noted that many of the efforts available were focused broadly around energy efficiency, and only the IGBA addressed green practices in business operations.

Participants working in similar sectors (i.e., government, private, or academic) tended to have knowledge of resources within their sector but limited knowledge of initiatives in other sectors. Furthermore, individuals familiar with each sector tended to see limited movement and action on the part of other sectors. For instance, a government representative felt there was little leadership on sustainability issues among the business community, and a University representative felt that there was a need for some type of forum to bring municipalities together to discuss sustainability issues in a more cohesive way.

Participants mentioned other community resources, including the University of Illinois and several of its affiliate programs (e.g., the Illinois Business Consulting and Illinois Sustainable Technology Center). However, interviewees were unclear as to the services these organizations offered. Participants explained that the University of Illinois and Parkland College offered courses and workshops that were focused on green business practices. The University was described as having many sustainability-related resources and features such as the Extension program, the presence of the Office of Sustainability, and several LEED certified buildings. Participants also mentioned a variety of community efforts and initiatives dealing with sustainability more broadly, not specific to businesses. For instance, a strong biking community was described, as well as a strong interest in local foods; local environmental groups such as the Prairie Rivers were mentioned and a new green housing subdivision in Urbana. Furthermore,

Although nearly all interviewees described a few existing programs, one participant expressed that there were currently no efforts to address business sustainability. In response to

the question on what existing programs or resources might be available to help a business become more green or sustainable, he responded, “I don’t think there are....but there ought to be.” He went on to explain that there was, however, interest and awareness of the need for business sustainability in the community.

In sum, most participants reported existing and developing efforts to address business sustainability. Individuals described programs they were most in contact with. The IGBA in particular was an often-cited new program specifically for businesses. However, one participant cited no existing efforts or programs in place to address business’s sustainability practices. Programs and community efforts were also described relating to sustainability more broadly.

Dimension A. Community Efforts Score: 5.7 – Preparation Stage

Dimension B: Community knowledge of efforts.

Among the interviewees who described community efforts by the IGBA, CCnet, and SEDAC, all agreed that there was very limited knowledge of those efforts among the business community. Some participants offered the explanation that there had been minimal marketing efforts (if any) for the existing programs. This may be because some of these efforts were in the pilot phase (i.e., IGBA) or were rather recent initiatives (CCNet). It is unclear why SEDAC (a longer running resource for businesses) was not being marketed to the business community.

Of the participants who described efforts to address business sustainability, all thought there was awareness among the business community, though this awareness was limited. One participant explained why she believed that the business community was likely to have at least some awareness of the efforts:

I think the people...are pretty knowledgeable... you know, reading the paper and hearing about [community efforts], or receiving emails or, you know, they follow the Downtown

Champaign Business District and hear about the Green Business Association and... So, even if it's never come up, my guess is that they would probably at least know about it [community efforts]. They may not be active in it, but they've probably heard about them.

In spite of limited marketing efforts, this interviewee and several others felt that businesses were likely to have heard of some of the resources, but may not be familiar with the services offered. Nevertheless, many interviewees acknowledged the need to increase awareness of existing programs, primarily through marketing and advertising.

Dimension B. Community Knowledge of Efforts Score: 3.6 - Vague Awareness Stage

Dimension C: Leadership.

All the participants who described existing community efforts also described a very active and diverse leadership, from government officials to business owners and students. Four organizations consistently emerged as being strong leaders on the issue of business sustainability, two of them having already been mentioned as having existing programs: the IGBA, the University, One Main (a development company), and Busey Bank. These organizations were described as being strong advocates and supporters of business sustainability and acted as true leaders by modeling green behavior.

One interviewee who had worked closely with business sustainability leaders described how leaders were contributing to move business sustainability forward: "I think the main way that [leaders are] supporting this, is investing a lot of time... A lot of time in showing up and helping to facilitate conversations about this." In response to how leaders show their support, one interviewee stated, "by just walking the walk themselves...making their business green...joining

discussion groups, coming to networking events, just sitting down and talking with other leaders.”

Two of the interviewees offered a different perspective. One participant felt that there were no leaders in the area of business sustainability, which was consistent with his perception that there were also no existing efforts to address business sustainability. He felt that students and consumers could be leaders in helping business sustainability gain attention, but currently were not acting as leaders. Another participant described an active leadership within government, but felt that traditional business leaders were not active in sustainability. He stated, “You know, hospitals are generally leaders in the business field and I don’t see them doing a whole lot.” Thus, for this participant, the lack of interest in sustainability shown by the larger businesses was evidence that there was still much work to be done. He believed that smaller businesses would be more likely to engage in sustainability if the larger businesses set that example.

An organization with seemingly great potential for leadership was the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce (CCCC), though participants had different views of its role in the area of business sustainability. Some interviewees thought that the CCCC was uninterested in the topic, whereas others stated that the organization was beginning to show interest. One participant explained that historically the CCCC had tended to be highly conservative and uninterested in anything that may hinder or limit a business, including environmental issues. Another interviewee explained that the CCCC did not always represent the interests of smaller businesses, thus smaller business associations formed such as the Urbana Business Association and the Champaign Downtown Association, which have shown more interest in green business practices.

Interviewees’ beliefs on the role of leaders were mixed. Most participants were highly positive about leadership in the community and cited several examples demonstrating leaders’

commitment on the issue. Another participant felt that there was leadership in the area of business sustainability, but that this was not based in the business community, but rather in other sectors (e.g., government). Lastly, one participant did not see any evidence of leadership in the area of business sustainability.

Dimension C. Leadership Score: 5.6 – Preparation Stage

Dimension D: Community climate.

Most interviewees agreed the community has a high degree of awareness and activity around the topic of sustainability broadly. However, as one participant explained, the community's overall interest in sustainability did not necessarily include business sustainability. "I think the community is aware of [sustainability] and people are aware of it, but it's not translating to businesses or specific parts of community development." Further, participants noted that certain elements of sustainability were more heavily focused on than others. For instance, health and energy use were reportedly topics of high interest in the community. One interviewee explained how an overly narrow definition of sustainability was problematic for businesses:

The community is...having a really hard time with defining sustainability. So they'll pick up on local foods and add that to [their] definition of sustainability...[or] understanding that storm water is a big [issue]. So I know the community understands those issues... [But] if a business doesn't deal with food they're like well, "I don't care about local foods." So [it's about] defining what does sustainability mean for a local ... computer consulting business [for example]. [The issue of] rain water harvesting doesn't really [apply to] them. So, how do we help [these businesses] define sustainability for themselves? How do we make [businesses] make that connection to their own operations,

to their product place, to whatever they need to do?

Thus, because the community context focuses on areas of sustainability that are not applicable to all businesses, businesses face uncertainty around how to incorporate sustainable practices, even if the overall climate around sustainability is positive.

Many participants differentiated between the Urbana and Champaign communities. Urbana was consistently described as more aware and vocal about its business sustainability concerns as compared to the Champaign community. In response to a question about awareness of business sustainability an interviewee stated:

I think it is much higher in the Urbana business community...I think there is a real difference in Urbana versus Champaign businesses...I think businesses in Urbana have been talking about these things and doing some things along these lines longer than businesses in Champaign.

The interviewee was describing business awareness and attention to sustainability; however, this also speaks to the community climate. This participant and many others perceived Urbana to have a more supportive community climate for business sustainability. Yet, interviewees indicated that this did not reflect a lack of interest from the Champaign community, but rather that it was more engrained within the Urbana community, and was a slightly newer issue for Champaign. Although not all participants distinguished between the Champaign and Urbana community, none of the participants expressed the opposing view that Champaign was more aware of sustainability issues than Urbana.

In contrast to the highly supportive community climate described by many participants, some community members were described as being very skeptical of the idea of climate change in general. For these members of the population, participants explained, skepticism is harder to

disprove because in the community there are no clear and obvious effects of climate change. A segment of the business population was also described as being uninterested in, and possibly even resistant to incorporating sustainability practices. One participant described part of this resistance originating from “legacy businesses,” which she explained as long-standing local businesses owned and operated by families and often passed down through the generations. These businesses were depicted as being heavily resistant to change, primarily because through their long-term success they saw little reason for change. The interviewee explained, however, that the resistance of legacy businesses was slowly shifting as younger generations were starting to take over the family businesses. These younger individuals were far more amenable and interested in topics such as green business practices.

A range of perceptions emerged from the interviews around community climate. Some segments of the business community and the overall community were described as uninterested in sustainability, whereas other parts of the community were described as actively engaged in business sustainability. Strong interest and support was described for sustainability issues more broadly, and although this did not always translate to businesses, it helped in creating a positive community context.

Dimension D. Community Climate Score: 4.8 – Preplanning Stage

Dimension E: Community knowledge of issue.

Interviewees indicated that throughout the community there was limited knowledge of the consequences of unsustainable business practices. Several participants noted that environmentalists, activists, and engaged citizens are likely to be knowledgeable about the potential environmental damage caused by businesses. However, many participants acknowledged that these individuals comprised a very small segment of the population.

Community members overall as well as members of the business community were described as generally well read but with low awareness of the consequences of un-sustainable business practices. When participants were asked to rate the community knowledge on the issue, they tended to rate the community low, yet there was a sense that there existed a vague awareness of the issue among the community.

Coincidentally, at the time of the interviews the large BP oil spill was receiving extensive coverage on the media and I asked interviewees if this might have any impact on how community members viewed local businesses in terms of their potential impact on the environment. Most interviewees agreed that the consequences of the oil spill were tragic, but that concerns over this issue would not translate into community concerns about local businesses' "footprint." This was thought to be the case because few local businesses have a noticeable impact on the community. Given this almost invisible footprint, community members hold few businesses responsible for their waste production, energy use and overall practices. One interviewee described her disappointment about this lack of concern among community members: "I think it's important for customers to hold other businesses more accountable and ask questions, and I don't see it, I don't hear it...I don't really hear much about people really asking, 'Why are businesses not being more sustainable?'"

Dimension E. Community Knowledge of Issue Score: 4.1 – Preplanning Stage

Dimension F: Available resources.

Interviewees described a variety of resources available to support business sustainability efforts. For example, interviewees consistently described one of the community's strongest resources as its volunteer base. Participants explained that volunteers or "donations of time" were instrumental in getting existing programs started. Similarly, another valuable resource

described was the motivation and drive of those working to move sustainability forward. One interviewee noted that although the individuals working closely on business sustainability efforts did not have specialized degrees in sustainability, they had other skills and expertise that were transferable, and had been effective in starting programs such as the IGBA and CCnet.

The University was also described as having the potential to be an excellent resource. However, participants conceded that accessibility was a problem and the existing expertise available in academia did not always translate well to businesses. A few participants considered University interns an accessible and available resource, yet they noted that to hire and work well with interns required familiarity with the academic system.

In terms of financial resources, nearly all interviewees agreed that there were limited funds available for sustainability initiatives. They noted that the IGBA is being funded through a local bank, and that it is using donated office space. In-kind donations, grants, and other funding sources had, until the time of the interviews, been sufficient to fund efforts. However, more long-term funding sources were being sought out by the IGBA to continue running their program. Overall, participants cited volunteers, donations of time from leaders, and the University as strong resources available to work toward business sustainability.

Dimension F. Available Resources Score: 5.9 – Preparation Stage

Overall stage of readiness.

According to these results, the Champaign-Urbana community's overall level of readiness is 4, the Preplanning Stage. This stage reflects the fact that although some segments of the community clearly recognize business sustainability as a concern, the lack of awareness in the community overall poses a significant barrier to businesses' engagement in sustainable practices. Due to a lack of recognition of business sustainability as a community concern, more

education is needed. However, because there is overall community interest in sustainability, most participants expected that if awareness was increased, the community would support business sustainability as well. Additionally, there are identifiable leaders working on the issue, with discussion forums and committees formed. However, improved communication among the private and public sectors would facilitate greater collaboration and fluidity in existing efforts.

Business Interviews

In this section I provide group profiles for the IGBA and non-IGBA business groups. After the group profiles, I describe the results of the business interviews and address research question 1b, on the barriers and motivators Champaign-Urbana businesses face toward environmental certification.

IGBA businesses' group profile.

IGBA businesses had either recently completed their certification or were in the process of obtaining the EC. Participants were either managers or owners. The managers had a high degree of control over business operations, and the owners would be more accurately described as owner-managers, as they were always present and working at their business. Thus, all the participants were very active, involved, and knowledgeable about their respective business.

All the interviews took place in a private area of the respective business, with the exception of one interview done at a café near the business. The tone of the interviews was professional and generally a bit lighter than the CRA interviews. The interview guide for businesses had fewer questions than the CRA and allowed participants more flexibility in their answers. Participants were answering questions about their own experiences rather than about efforts in the community at large, and seemed more at liberty to share and talk freely.

All participants reported an overall positive experience with the certification process. Yet, businesses differed in the barriers they perceived toward certification given that the challenges they faced were related to their particular type of business. Businesses also differed in the degree of importance they placed on various motivating factors, though none of the participants' responses stood out as remarkably different from the rest.

Non-IGBA business group profile.

The non-IGBA group included businesses that had: (a) expressed an interest in certification, or (b) exhibited green practices that were easily visible to the public. As with the IGBA interviews, several participants were managers with a high degree of control or owners who were active in the daily functioning of the business. In a few instances, the interviewee was an individual within the business that was most knowledgeable about their green practices. All the interviews took place in a private area of the respective business.

The tone of non-IGBA interviews was slightly different than both the CRA and IGBA interviews. Among the participants who had not been in contact with the IGBA, there was more curiosity and a degree of confusion as to the purpose of the interviews. It seemed least clear to this group why they were being interviewed. As a result, I described the research more carefully and explained why I was interested in learning more about their "point of view" and experiences. Apart from this difference, the interviews were relaxed and participants shared readily. Among this group emerged notable differences in how the certification was perceived. The non-IGBA group held a variety of beliefs about the expected barriers and motivators of getting certified. One business stood out for not having any interest in certification, as all other businesses were either considering certification or putting it on hold for the time being. The owner of the non-interested business had incorporated several green practices into the business but expressed that

the certification offered little added value to his business. Thus, this participant stood out given that all other participants saw value in the certification, even if the business was unable to obtain certification due to a variety of barriers.

Business Interview Results.

In this section I describe the results of the qualitative individual interviews with local businesses, which addresses research question 1a: What are the specific motivators and barriers that Champaign-Urbana restaurant, retail, and office businesses face toward environmental certification? These interviews provide an in-depth examination of factors that influence a business to be green certified. I begin with a brief explanation of how participants conceptualized barriers and motivators, and then organize the remainder of the section by internal and external factors.

Participants reported that many factors influence a business's decision to be green certified, and saw these factors as influential to varying degrees. For instance, participants differentiated between a barrier and a challenge or a road bump. A barrier was used to reference something that acts as an impasse, something that does not allow you to move forward. The term *barrier* was used sparingly by participants, as they often preferred the term *challenge* or *road bump* to refer to something that may have made the goal more difficult, but was merely something to be dealt with, not something that would keep them from pursuing the EC.

Similarly, participants distinguished between *motivators*, *perks* or *bonuses*, and *benefits*. Motivating factors were perceived as a driving force, whereas they saw a perk as a lesser benefit that was not a primary reason for getting the certification. Furthermore, certified businesses described benefits they found after completing the certification that were not expected but still a positive factor. The following section describes internal factors that influence a business to

obtain EC. The major factors discussed include perceptions of green, a sense of responsibility, business image, the certification experience, organizational culture, time and money, and business-specific barriers.

Internal Factors.

Perceptions of green.

Participants described a variety of perceptions of *green*, yet few of them were neutral. Most prevalent in the interviews was that the term green had a very positive connotation. The term green and its application to a business were associated with being “cool,” “fashionable,” and “progressive.” A certified business manager explained one of the perks of being green certified:

I like the ‘bragging right’ thing, and it’s something to be proud of, especially in our community. I think that being green and sustainable is a little more cool than it is maybe in other areas...and I think that people respect it...I think people think it’s cool to be green. In this example, the interviewee’s belief that the community had a positive perception of green was a motivating factor toward EC.

Another group of participants expressed the idea that everyone wants to be green. An interviewee representing a non-IGBA business described the benefits of being certified:

We can hold ourselves out as a group that’s mindful of the environment, that we’re trying to do our part. And I think that that’s appealing to businesses everywhere. Because I think everybody’s trying to do the same thing...I don’t think there’s anybody that’s really out to kill nature.

This interviewee and several others made the assumption that being green is universally appealing. From this point of view, there is no down side to going green, and there is no logical

argument against green, the only question is to what degree each business and individual can implement greener practices.

Some non-IGBA businesses referenced negative perceptions of green in the community overall. These remarks tended to reference how green was conceived of in the past. For instance, trying not to be wasteful used to be considered cheap as opposed to resourceful, and much of what is now considered green was only for “hippies” in the 70’s. A couple non-IGBA businesses expressed concerns about being seen as “granola-heads” and referenced parts of the community as the “land of Birkenstocks.” The negative context in which these labels were described makes it likely that these perceptions act as a barrier to certification.

Thus, two unique and divergent groups emerged from the interviews, those who expressed concerns about being viewed as hippies and those who perceived green as having no downside. The distinction among groups was not based on certification status, as some non-IGBA businesses perceived no consequences to being certified. However, none of the IGBA businesses felt there was a downside to being certified.

Another perceived consequence of being green certified expressed only by non-IGBA businesses is what I term “green judgment.” This is the notion that once a business incorporates green practices they are more heavily criticized for the practices that are not green. A business owner discussed his experience with “green judgment:”

Along with the higher intelligence level [among community members], people are more judgmental... ‘Well, you’re not doing this and you’re not doing that.’ And it has kind of a militant sound to it. I think it has the ability to turn people off.

This interviewee implied that there is a community perception that green is right and those who are not following suit are wrong, and thus are judged for not being green. Another non-IGBA

business owner indirectly referenced green judgment in instances when customer's expectations are not met:

Maybe people want us to be certified or to be green, and they hear some things like, 'Oh, they're working with local farms.' And then that becomes our reputation, which is great, but...I think it's a [high] level of expectation. Because people just assume that we're going to lead the way when it comes to the green movement. And, and in some ways, we do really well, and in others, it's a struggle for a small business.

This quote highlights that customers may have expectations that a small business may not be able to meet. Instead of being recognized for the green practices they are implementing, there is criticism for what the business has not done. As the first quote emphasizes, this could easily turn people off and not want to make any effort toward green practices. Green judgment may be tied to popular assumptions of being 100% green as opposed to the more pragmatic and realistic framework of doing what you can with the resources at your disposal. The theme that emerged around the sense of responsibility some businesses felt toward the environment is described in the next section.

Responsibility.

IGBA and non-IGBA participants highlighted some altruistic motivations for wanting to be green certified. Without prompt, several IGBA and non-IGBA business representatives expressed their belief that being green certified was "the right thing to do." A certified business representative explained why his business was certified: "Most of us feel it's just the right thing to do. On a personal level, it's just what we've gotta do." This quote implies a sense of personal responsibility to do what is right, and the EC is seen as a means toward being a good

environmental steward. Similarly, the owner of an IGBA business in the process of becoming certified explained his primary motivation for seeking the certification:

I think probably the number one reason was that...we feel like it's just the right thing to do. I mean, we want to be good stewards of our natural resources. And if someone can help us reduce the amount of carbon that we use, basically, we would be very, we're very interested in that. And that's just the right thing to do.

For these and other business representatives that expressed similar beliefs, there is a very clear sense that being a green business is "right" and is good. Yet, business representatives who expressed that an EC was the right thing to do were not blind to the challenges and costs of the certification. An IGBA business owner in the process of being certified explained:

And really, this green initiative, there are some things that aren't that cost effective as far as how we recycle some of our cardboard...We could just throw everything in the trash, but we sort it. And the paper that we're buying now, the cleaning supplies that are biodegradable and environmentally not hazardous, are probably not the most cost-effective... But, we can make that decision, since we're kind of a small business and locally owned. I mean, I think if you're [thinking about] your cost and making money that this, in some ways, is a little bit more expensive program to do. It's just the right thing to do, and we accept that.

For this interviewee, the belief that his business was doing the right thing was enough to counter the immediate additional work and costs associated with curbing their environmental impact. Thus, for participants who expressed the belief that obtaining the EC was the right thing to do, this belief served as a fairly strong motivator.

Similarly, several IGBA and non-IGBA participants described the “feel good factor” as a motivating factor as well. A non-IGBA business representative reported: “I can go to bed with a clear conscience [*laughing*] or a clearer conscience.” Once again, the idea of doing the right thing is embedded in this quote. An IGBA business owner expressed a similar idea: “...and then, of course, the not tangible is just you feel better about it...I feel better that I’m, that I’m doing those things.” Based on participants’ responses, both the “feel good factor” and the “right thing to do” ideas reflect an underlying sense of responsibility that can serve as a strong motivating factor.

In regard to a business’s responsibility toward the environment, there was one notable difference in the perceptions of IGBA and non-IGBA business representatives. Only IGBA business representatives emphasized that being a green business meant doing their part, rather than being 100% green (e.g., carbon neutral, completely organic, no use of plastics). IGBA businesses recognized that being green still had to make business sense and that it was both impractical and impossible to be “100% green.” An IGBA business owner explained this idea best:

I look at it as a business doing their small part in doing things good for our environment. So, me or you or any other business can’t do everything, you know, you can’t be 100% green. That’s impossible for a business to do that...but doing, if everybody does their small part, you know...

The underlying theme of responsibility toward the environment was again reflected in the idea of “doing one’s part.” Furthermore, the interviewee highlighted that being a green business is about doing the best possible within the capabilities of that business. In contrast, few non-IGBA businesses made this distinction. For example, one interviewee explained that a green business

was one that is “attempting to do everything green.” This belief could pose a considerable barrier, as it is unrealistic for most businesses to implement fully green practices in all aspects of their operations.

In addition to implying a sense of responsibility, the idea of doing one’s part also implies a threshold for how much each business should be held accountable for, a threshold that resides in the decision maker’s mind. Participants indicated that doing one’s part was about doing as much as possible within the confines of the business and its financial abilities. However, once this threshold was reached, it was as though the responsibility had been fulfilled, and the individual could shift the focus to other matters. A non-IGBA business owner explained:

We just built the store, so I made the store as green as I possibly could, you know, using sustainable product lighting, wood...and we recycle everything. So, because it was a concern of mine from the very beginning, I didn’t really delve into seeing how much more I could do.

Thus, for businesses already implementing green practices, regardless of certification status, there was less immediate concern with their environmental impact, as they felt that their impact had already been minimized. For businesses like these, the value and the motivation for obtaining the certificate was to validate and lend credibility to their past and current efforts. This theme is explained further in the next section.

Business Image.

The most cited motivator for obtaining certification for IGBA and non-IGBA businesses was public image. A manager for an IGBA business explained: “Public image...you know, getting certified to have that credibility to...show that we really are trying to make the world a better place.” Respondents perceived that a business’s public image was related to community

recognition of the business's efforts. When a business's efforts were recognized through media or at networking events they felt rewarded for their efforts and motivated to continue working toward greening their business practices.

Another favorable component of public image is for a business to be viewed as a leader. The wish to be leaders in their community emerged as a strong motivating factor for many of the IGBA businesses and some of the non-IGBA businesses. This theme was brought up without prompt and in a variety of contexts. Leadership was brought up in terms of wanting to serve as a model for other businesses, as well as consumers and employees. An IGBA business owner explained:

I think I'm making an impact on [my] employees, plus any client that comes in [and] they see the sign on the door. It starts a conversation and we talk about it. So it's kind of, to me, it's not just that we're green in the business, but it's trying to get people to do the same in their homes or their businesses.

This business owner recognized the power of being a model and of leading by example. Other participants saw leadership as being a part of something new, as being among the first to support and incorporate green business practices. A non-IGBA business representative stated, "We want to be known as being on the leading edge instead of somebody dragging us into it." For this business, being at the forefront of the green movement was the best place to be. The assumption was that other businesses would eventually have to cede and incorporate green practices, but that doing so at a later stage would reflect poorly on them.

A theme emerged around businesses that I term "born green," and the importance these businesses placed on maintaining their reputation as environmentally conscious businesses. A business that was born green was generally one that had sustainability incorporated into its

mission. A born green business typically also sold products that were reused, recycled, organic, free of toxins and chemicals, fair trade, locally grown, or locally made. I use the term born green to distinguish these businesses from those that incorporate green practices through their own interest or through a certification.

For born green businesses, getting the certification was often described as the obvious thing to do. One IGBA business owner explained: “We would have been embarrassed if we hadn’t, for a green store.” Another IGBA business manager stated: “It’s what we do, so we need that label... it’s central to our mission.” Thus, for born green businesses the certification lends credibility to the business’s claims of environmental stewardship and provides validation of the identity they had established.

Certification also provided proof that the business was not green washed, a constant concern for legitimate green businesses. An IGBA business manager explained the value of certification: “It proves we’re not green washed. It’s the walk, we walk our talk...it’s keeping up with the [customer’s] expectations.” As referenced in the last quote, many born green business owners believed their customers expected them to be certified, and that it would appear odd if they did not seek the certification. Thus, by implementing their green values in various aspects of their practices, green businesses maintain their reputation and public image.

However, not all born green businesses interviewed chose to be certified. In contrast to the view that customers expect certification and that it enhances a business’s reputation, some born green businesses did not perceive their customers as expecting or demanding the certification. Thus, even for a green business the owner or manager must perceive a demand from their customers to pursue certification. An additional barrier for born green businesses was financial concerns. Some businesses were not in a financial position to make any investments

and were trying to operate as economically as possible. In addition, a few participants referenced the difficult economic times as a reason to just try to get through until the local and national financial situation improved. Thus, economic concerns served as a barrier even for born green businesses that saw great value in the certification.

Among businesses interviewed, the marketing possibilities of the EC were seen as a motivating factor, however it was brought up far less often than expected, and in the context of public image. One IGBA business owner explained the value of marketing:

He [interviewee's business partner] looked at [certification] from the standpoint of, "This could be a marketing opportunity for you. You're going to be recognized as a certified business. And that will look good to the community"...he saw it as more of a marketing opportunity. And for businesses, you know, that's always a good thing.

Interestingly, there was also a sub-group of non-IGBA businesses that, if certified, did not plan to use the EC for marketing purposes, as explained in the following quote: "It's not something that we would use in marketing the business. That's not what we do. It's sort of a nice side. It's like belonging to one of our professional organizations...it gives us credibility." This business and several others did not feel that the greatest value of the certificate was the marketing appeal for customers, but instead focused more on how it could improve their public image as a business and offer proof of their credibility.

Based on participants' responses, it is evident that business representatives value the way they are viewed by their community. Born green businesses valued the EC as a means of legitimizing their green reputation, whereas other businesses used the EC to demonstrate their leadership. Regardless of the underlying reason, public image was an often-cited motivating factor to obtain certification.

Certification experience.

IGBA and non-IGBA businesses clearly differed in their perceptions about the difficulty of obtaining the certification. IGBA businesses had the benefit of going through the experience of the certification process and were able to comment on the process through hindsight. In contrast, non-IGBA businesses often faced uncertainty about the certification requirements and tended to assume they would be laborious.

Regardless of the challenges IGBA businesses faced, several of the businesses reported that overall the process was “not that hard.” In response to a question about what the most challenging aspect of the certification was, one interviewee gave a brief description of a technical problem encountered in the process and then stated: “I mean, it’s really not that, it wasn’t that hard to do, honestly.” Another business described the difficulty of finding the time to complete the certification criteria, but felt that the actual tasks that were asked of him were rather easy:

Mostly it was stressful because I didn’t have time to get done what they wanted me to get done. So sometimes I felt like I was just outright avoiding them, I felt so bad. *[laughs]*
But it was easy. It was a pretty easy process.

One IGBA business owner suggested it would be important to inform other businesses about the relatively easy process, as it might help motivate them to get certified. Non-certified businesses that had not looked into the requirements of certification expressed a lot of uncertainty as to how much work the certification entailed, and what the criteria might be.

Another experience-based difference that emerged between IGBA and non-IGBA businesses was a self-proclaimed lack of knowledge about green practices among some non-IGBA businesses. One non-IGBA business owner explained:

I'd like to tell you that I'm environmentally aware and everything else. No, I'm not... We try to do what's right [but] I don't know what's right... I don't know what information is garbage out there, and what information is not.

Thus, many non-IGBA businesses were faced with an abundance of information in the general media that was difficult to interpret, acting as an additional barrier. Furthermore, I noted that many interviewees had difficulty discussing green business as a topic, specifically with finding the right words to express themselves. This discomfort with language probably reflects an overall lack of knowledge and comfort around sustainability issues, and may further act as a barrier to implementing sustainability efforts.

Although IGBA business representatives also reported feeling a general lack of knowledge about green practices before being certified, they viewed this as a challenge and a learning process rather than an actual barrier to certification. These businesses perceived the IGBA as a resource and turned to them for help or with questions. Thus, IGBA businesses differed from non-IGBA businesses in two key ways. First, IGBA businesses saw their lack of knowledge as a challenge to be overcome through the process of being certified, and second, these businesses recognized the IGBA as a resource to help them overcome any obstacles they did not know how to handle on their own.

Organizational culture.

Directors, owners, managers, and staff, all have the potential to be influential in whether a business is certified or not. Participants explained a board of directors in particular had a substantial amount of power over a business.

If you look at [our organization's] Board of Directors, they're really old... They're pretty well established in what they do day-to-day, and so stakeholders in terms of the Board of

Directors... they're not much for change...They went years and years without having to think about [sustainability], and now we try to present that as a concern, and they're like, "why? What difference does it make?"

For this business, the prospect of having to convince the board members of the value of the certification posed a significant barrier, large enough for them to decide not to pursue certification for the time being.

In addition to board members, if a business has a large number of staff with varying opinions on green practices, this can act as barrier. In these cases, the process of making changes for a certification was presented as a daunting task:

We kind of figured out that based on all the people we have here, it'd be better off to sort of start turning the ship in that direction, rather than jump in to say, alright, we're going to do the certification right away.

In this case, the certification was proposed by staff members rather than by an owner or board member. Because the idea was introduced by a peer rather than an organization leader, fellow staff members seemed more resistant to the change. In contrast, when the decision came from an owner or manager, staff who had been reluctant to proceed with the idea accepted and embraced the certification process much more readily with a bit of education and support. An IGBA owner explained:

I didn't worry about what they [employees] thought, because I knew that's why I was getting into it, is to kind of help them understand why we were doing it, and hoping that they'd take some of those practices and use them at home. So I knew I was going to meet with some resistance. But that did not prevent me from doing it. That was just expected.

Far more often, IGBA businesses and non-IGBA businesses reported that staff and employees were or would be highly supportive and enthusiastic about the certificate. Some staff even helped to motivate the owner or manager to continue working towards completing the certification requirements. The owner of an IGBA business reported: “The employees were really into it too. They got excited when I told them that they were doing this.” An IGBA business manager described a similar experience, “They’re proud of it, which is a motivator. They really like being involved with it.” Particularly in larger organizations, the support of fellow staff was described as critical to obtaining the EC:

I think having the support of not just my boss or the executive director, but we have monthly meetings. We call them [lunch meetings], and at each [lunch meeting] I would give an update...people were eager to hear what was going on. You know, how we were doing [with the process of certification]. So it was nice, it was good to share with them. And it’s really people’s...you can feel the momentum building. Their attitudes are, you know, going green. It’s really good.

Thus, for larger businesses whose employees have differing attitudes about the certification, a mechanism to unite people and create momentum seems critical. In fact, this organization was able to complete the certification in record time.

Time and money.

Smaller businesses, newer businesses, and businesses with an individual carrying the majority of the responsibility were more likely to express a concern about the time required to obtain the EC. Time limitations were also evident in these participants’ tone, pace of the interview, and overall presentation as having a sense of exhaustion and being completely overwhelmed. A quote from a non-IGBA business representative illustrates this point well:

“Time, um, I would say that’s certainly a barrier, because [*laughing*] yeah, we have none.”

Another non-IGBA business owner expressed a similar idea: “It just seems like, when you’re self employed, every minute counts, you know... I seem to be working in every waking hour. Shoot, I was working in my dreams this morning!” These interviewees, although likely overworked, were all still interested in becoming certified.

If the struggling businesses could be thought of as treading water and surviving for the moment, then most of the IGBA businesses can be thought of as experienced swimmers, not focusing on survival but rather on how to move forward most efficiently. IGBA businesses struggled with time constraints as well: “ Everything’s going to take precedence over becoming green certified, unfortunately, you know, I have a business to run.” Another IGBA business owner reported:

Probably the major issue is that it’s not in the core of things we do, you know, waiting on customers and selling... it’s not as high a priority. And we haven’t made it as high a priority....The things we pursue the most are the ones that are going to be the most cost effective and help our business. And the things that are, you know, less important we push down the line. And that’s what I’ve, you know, we’ve done with this. But it’s still important. It’s just not our, not our highest priority.

From these quotes it becomes clear that even businesses committed to getting a certification must prioritize the well-being of their business first. The certification is still something they value and are willing to work toward, but most businesses are unable to give it precedence over their daily business tasks.

The exception to the prioritizing problem was when certification was a requirement from an individual with greater authority in the business, such as an owner, board member, or general

manager. Although there were few examples of this, when this was the case participants completed the certification much more quickly, and the issue of prioritizing was not an issue.

Whereas time seemed a challenge for all businesses, cost was not always considered a barrier, and in some cases cost savings were a motivating factor. Nevertheless, the cost to implement the required changes for certification was one of the most cited barriers. Businesses described the initial investment to purchase green products for their business operations in varying terms – as a concern, a small barrier, and for some it was the reason for not pursuing certification. The cost of the certification process was much more of a concern for non-IGBA businesses than it was for IGBA businesses. One business representative that showed high interest in certification explained: “Cost of getting certified is probably going to be one of those ... barriers because we’re functioning on a shoe-string right now and just in reading through the criteria I was seeing dollar signs.” Many businesses acknowledged that implementing some of the required changes in energy use (i.e., switching to low energy light bulbs) could mean long-term savings in energy bills. However, they noted their inability to make that initial investment.

In contrast, those IGBA businesses that had been capable of making such an investment were enthusiastic about the anticipated savings:

And we’re kind of excited to see, in the end, look at it at the end of this quarter, after we did all the things that we did, to see what our utility savings are, you know... we’re not going to save money for one month and then it goes back to the way it was. It’s going to be an ongoing thing. So our little bit of time we spent focusing on those key items is going to net us savings forever.

The businesses that cited cost savings as a motivator tended to see the certificate as a long-term investment. Yet, some certified businesses acknowledged that some of the changes suggested by

the IGBA they either could not do or would have to pursue at a later time. Thus, certified businesses were not necessarily better off financially (although this did help). The difference seemed to be more in their willingness to work with the certification criteria and their focus on the cost savings versus the initial expense.

Business specific barriers.

A more tangible barrier discussed by non-IGBA businesses was being a tenant rather than the owner of the premises where the business operated. The concern was two-fold; first was the obstacle of having to gain a landlord's permission to make structural changes. Second, was that the business would invest money in changes that they could not take with them in case of a move (e.g., permanent lighting). A non-IGBA business representative explained her concerns:

The fact that we are renting space in an old building may be a challenge for the certification process. I'm actually concerned that we may not be able to become certified without the cooperation of the landlord, who is an absentee landlord, and is just interested in the income from the building. So the question is, will we within our space, be able to gain certification, with the fact that we can't control some of the bigger...components of say the HVAC system.

Being a tenant versus an owner of the business space was not brought up by any of the IGBA businesses; however, it is unclear if this was not a barrier or if this group all owned their space.

The businesses interviewed experienced many of the same barriers, yet it is also relevant to note that most of the certified businesses met with certain challenges that were specific to their business. For instance, retailers struggled with choosing optimum lighting that was still energy efficient, and a restaurant struggled with updating old cooling equipment. Thus, it is important not to discount the unique barriers each business faces.

In sum, many internal factors can influence a business's decision to be certified. The primary barriers tend to be negative perceptions of green, a sense of green judgment, lack of knowledge, time and financial constraints, and business specific barriers. Beliefs around doing one's part and feeling that the certification is the right thing to do acted as strong motivating factors for several businesses. Additionally, taking on a leadership role, enjoying cost savings, marketing the certification, enhancing a business's public image, and having a sense that certification is consistent with the business's mission also act as motivating factors.

External factors.

The previous section focused on a variety of factors internal to the business that had the potential to influence a business to be certified. Several factors outside of a business's realm of control can also be influential. These external factors all play a role in the community context, and include: demographics, other businesses, and government and resources.

Demographics.

There was great variability in how businesses perceived their community. Some non-IGBA business felt that the community acted as a barrier to certification by demonstrating a lack of support for green businesses. Similarly, other businesses described characteristics of the community that they felt were inconsistent with endorsing a green business. One IGBA business owner explained, "We are a fairly affluent community, and I think that we're also, our demographics are kind of a use and throw away type group." This interviewee implied that a consumption-oriented population would be less inclined to show interest in greener business practices that encourage minimizing waste and reducing consumption. Both IGBA and non-IGBA business representatives expressed the view that there was limited awareness about environmental issues, however IGBA businesses were confident this awareness would grow,

while non-IGBA businesses cited this as a reason why the certificate had little appeal. Another potential community barrier described by both a non-IGBA and an IGBA business was that because some community members did not recognize environmental issues, in order to not alienate these customers a business with an EC should not highlight changes in the business as being due to environmental concerns. One non-IGBA business representative explained:

The idea is not to come on too forcefully that this is an environmental mission, but to appeal to everybody, not just people who get it already, but that there may be some...lack of understanding...by members of the community who don't necessarily believe that there are environmental problems that we need to address now.

An IGBA business owner touched on the same issue, but felt that with the appropriate approach, most people would be receptive. The participant stated, "and we don't preach the environmentally sound [piece] to them. We just, [explain], 'it would be much easier for you if we [emailed your documents],' and then they're open to doing that." Thus, whereas the non-IGBA business was concerned about alienating some customers, the IGBA business owner managed to appeal to her customer's sense of practicality, without necessarily stating that it was for an environmental cause.

There were also some participants, mostly non-IGBA businesses, that felt that the community "wouldn't have any bearing" on their decision to be certified. These businesses felt that the community was not unique and that it would not be any easier or more difficult to obtain a certification in Champaign than in any other community. In contrast, all IGBA businesses felt that the overall community was a motivating factor. Many participants believed that having a well known University in the community promoted the presence of people with "greater social

conscience,” which helped to create more awareness of issues like sustainability among community members.

A more specific element of the community of crucial importance to businesses was their customers. Non-IGBA businesses reported that they did not think their customers were demanding the certificate. “I think it would be more the customers, you know. If I was getting a lot of comments about, ‘we’d really like to see this certified,’ I think that would be an influence.” The implication was that this business did not feel that customers were demanding or encouraging a certification, but that they had the power to do so and be influential.

Furthermore, some businesses thought that customers were unlikely to choose a business simply because they had a certification, as the following non-IGBA business owner explained:

I think this community’s probably got a higher level of consciousness about it than many. But people want to go out to eat, and they think, “Oh, I love that [sandwich] at [ABC restaurant], let’s go there.” Most people aren’t going, “Where is their toilet paper made?” Thus, there is the perception that many of a business’s green efforts, such as purchasing recycled products, go unnoticed by customers and do not influence their decision on where to eat or shop. In contrast, IGBA businesses felt that their customers expected certification, motivating these businesses to pursue EC.

IGBA businesses tended not to see a downside in being certified, as one IGBA business owner stated: “I would think that there would be a consumer base who would consider shopping somewhere that is green certified. And I don’t think that there’s any detraction to your other customer base who might not care.” In contrast, a business owner who was not interested in certification felt that customers might interpret the certification to mean extra cost to the business, a cost which would be passed down to the customer in the form of price increases. This

perspective was rare but is nevertheless a part of the spectrum on which customers may influence a business and in some cases act as a barrier.

Businesses, particularly non-IGBA businesses referenced the local and national economic situation as influencing their own financial abilities. Several businesses had felt the consequences of the economic downturn, some had to let people go, others had to cut back on their budgets, whereas others had to make changes in the products they carried. These businesses explained that there was little or no money for additional projects, the important thing was to get through the difficult times, and when the economy improved, then they could consider projects such as getting certified. One non-IGBA business manager explained:

We're in a very challenging economy right now, and locally much more acute than other parts of the state, unfortunately... So I think right now we're erring on the side of caution. We're putting a lot of things on hold...we've trimmed as much as we feel we can trim off of our budget right now. And, you know, as things loosen up as the community becomes more economically stable, then I think we'll start looking at things like certifications, that sort of thing.

The economic downturn created financial barriers for many businesses. However, some business representatives felt that economic conditions prompted consumers to be more conscientious in supporting local businesses, a non-IGBA business owner noted:

Walmart and Target and all those large North Prospect stores are going to be around forever, and if we want our local independents to survive, then we have to be smart about where we spend our money. I've had more people in the last 2 weeks say, you know, we just want to make sure you're around. We want to make sure that this doesn't go away, that this is something that we locally love...And, you know, of course, that's a, that's the

best compliment you could ever get. But I think overall the people that I interact with are more conscious about where they spend their money. It's like voting dollars.

Consumer's awareness of the importance of shopping locally is an integral part of sustainability and supports business sustainability efforts. Shopping at local businesses means supporting the local economy, and often means supporting a business with a smaller environmental footprint. This business's experience with customers lends support to other businesses' perception that the community does have a higher degree of awareness about issues dealing with social consciousness.

Other businesses.

A large component of a business community context is the presence of other businesses. Competing businesses are highly cited in the literature as an influential factor. However, participants in this study also recognized business colleagues (i.e., other local business owners) and transaction partners as influential. A few businesses (both IGBA and non-IGBA) cited their competitors as a motivating factor, as explained by a non-IGBA business representative, "we have to compete with the big guys, and this is something that sets us apart from the status quo." For this business, the certificate is a means of differentiating themselves from others. However, far more often businesses reported simply being too busy to take notice of what their competitors were doing. Furthermore, businesses did not necessarily view the certificate as a means of gaining a competitive advantage, as an IGBA business owner explained:

If I'm trying to get an edge on a competitor, I don't think it would be through this. It would be more through products on the shelves, or our customer service kind of things. So I guess this could tie in a little to our customer service.

Thus, IGBA businesses, like some non-IGBA businesses did not necessarily believe they would attract more customers with the certificate or that it would provide them an advantage over competitors. This factor was heavily dependent on the perception of the interviewee and could act either as a motivator or neutral factor.

In sharp contrast to seeing other businesses as competitors were the ideas expressed by an IGBA business owner about finding support in “like-minded businesses:”

I think, because you’ve got [health store x], you’ve got [green store y]... and you’ve got the markets. And you’ve got a lot of like-mindedness. And that’s definitely great in helping the community go forward with it. Because...I think businesses that aren’t green minded, they see that, and it’s kind of like they want to jump on that... And I think the camaraderie between businesses that are green, you know, we’re all trying to support each other. I think that will just continue to grow, and then make it even more attractive to other businesses.

The concept of business camaraderie is almost alien in the business world, yet, having other local businesses interested in green practices were viewed as a source of support by this IGBA business owner.

With regard to the role of their respective industries, most respondents felt that their industries were largely inconsequential. However, a few felt their industry could take on a motivating role, as explained by a non-IGBA business representative:

If the general trend of the industry was towards certification of some sort, that’s a lead we couldn’t, that’s a trend we couldn’t ignore. And, you know, we don’t want to be left behind, so to speak. So I would say that it is a factor.

Thus, industry silence on the issue of green practices encourages and condones inaction on the

part of their member businesses.

Participants reported that other businesses they interact with, such as retailers, or vendors, can help sustain their green practices. One non-IGBA business representative explained:

A couple of the companies now are sending us case files, which could be literally thousands of documents. They'll send them on DVD. And they'll say, "you print what you have to print. Um, we're not. And, we'd encourage you to read it on your screen rather than print it out." And, and so it's clear that that's where their priorities are. And we want to show them that we're with them in that regard.

Thus, whereas industry for most businesses was inconsequential in their interest in certification, the green practices of associated businesses were more noticeable and could act as a small motivating factor.

City government and resources.

A community's policies, regulations, and resources can be a significant influential factor toward EC. In this regard, the greatest community barrier cited by businesses was a lack of commercial recycling services. Interestingly, many smaller businesses were able to get around this issue because they had minimal waste and owners or managers were able to take recyclables to their homes. However, not all businesses had this luxury. Businesses interpreted a lack of recycling services as an indication that the city government did not value or prioritize recycling. An IGBA business owner explained:

The whole recycling part of it is extremely difficult to do. They don't make it easy to recycle, I don't think, in this community. And so I think that's something that as a community we just need to decide that it's important and whatever it takes to get us there....I don't know that those that are making the decisions on, for example, the

recycling, realize that there's that much support for it.

Businesses also acknowledged the importance of the regulations imposed by the Health Department, yet they noted that some of these are in conflict with greener practices. They reported that there was no flexibility or alternatives offered by the health department, creating a conflict between meeting certification requirements and health regulations. In the end, the requirements of the health department were seen as having higher priority.

Businesses may receive incentives to pursue greener practices through tax rebates, grants, monetary assistance, or by establishing easily accessible resources. However, very few businesses knew of any available incentives at the national, state, or local levels. Participants tended to assume that incentives were available, but that they were unaware of them due to lack of time to actively seek these out. An IGBA business manager stated: "So [incentives] might be out there, but as a busy...person running a business, you're probably not going to really look into it." However, nearly all businesses mentioned that tax incentives would be a highly motivating factor.

Similarly, few businesses were able to cite resources readily available to help them implement green practices if they so chose. Most non-IGBA businesses assumed they would not be difficult to find and would be easily accessible on the Internet. However, one non-IGBA business that had actually attempted this search on his own found it much more difficult than he anticipated. In contrast, certified businesses cited a lack of easily accessible resources, and felt that the IGBA was their greatest resource. Further, these businesses saw the IGBA as a bridge to other resources. One non-IGBA business representative even expressed that the presence of the IGBA in the community acted as a motivating factor:

First and foremost, is the fact that the Green Business Association is right in town. I mean having them locally, seeing other businesses being certified, seeing about it in the local news, you know, things of that nature, I think makes you more aware. But it also makes you, to an extent, you want to be part of that too. You see people are getting good press and, you know, you see them celebrating, and they're able to put the certification sticker on their front door. I think that's something that everybody would want.

In sum, several external community factors were influential in businesses' interest in and decision to become certified. The community overall was a key motivating force and included factors such as community demographics, customers, support for local business, like-minded businesses, presence of the IGBA, and city government. Businesses' respective industries were largely a neutral factor with potential to be influential. Similarly, a lack of incentives was not considered a barrier, but having incentives was perceived as a strong motivator. Lastly, on a broader scale, the national economic situation was described as having an influence on businesses' interest in certification and created difficult financial situations for many.

Community context of sustainable business

In this section I draw on the CRA and the business interviews to address research question 1: How is the community context linked to businesses' willingness to embrace sustainable practices? Research findings indicate that three key elements are at the core of this relation: the community's sense of sustainability, a growing social norm around sustainability broadly, and a fragmentation of community efforts.

The community's sense of sustainability.

Participants of the CRA and the business interviews described a growing social awareness around environmental sustainability in Champaign-Urbana. Based on interviewee's

responses, the community's definition of sustainability would encompass three intersecting areas of society: health, energy, and a strong local economy. Similarly, sustainability as defined in the literature encompasses society (human welfare), the environment, and the economy. Thus, there is considerable overlap but still differences between the two definitions, as the community definition does not yet focus on the environmental piece. Although the community does not have a focus on the environmental aspect of sustainability, its focus on health, the economy, and energy encourages practices that are beneficial for the environment. For instance, participants of the CRA and business interviews described the Champaign-Urbana community as having an active biking community (which reduces carbon-emissions in comparison to using cars), well-established natural food stores (these promote organic, pesticide-free products that are better for the soil), and a thriving Farmer's Market (which promotes consumption of local foods, contributing to the local economy while emitting less carbon emissions than standard grocery stores). Thus, a community's focus on health is tied to overall sustainability.

Another component of the community's definition of sustainability is energy. CRA participants, in particular, reported this was a hot topic both locally and nationally; energy referred to improving energy efficiency and exploring alternative sources of energy. Lastly, the community's awareness of the local economy was also evident. As business interview participants described, a growing segment of consumers were aware of the power of their dollar and were choosing to support local businesses over large chain stores.

CRA participants recognized that a potential problem was that businesses were *not* yet a part of the community definition of sustainability, and reported limited awareness and concern in the community over businesses' impact on the environment. Yet, because of the community's overall awareness of sustainability, CRA interviewees believed there would be community

support to address business sustainability as the topic continued to grow. Thus, the community context for broad sustainability was positive, although there is little accountability for businesses' environmental impact.

Social norm.

According to CRA interviewees, there exist ongoing sustainability-related efforts in multiple sectors of the Champaign-Urbana community, including government, business, and media. The existence of diverse sustainability-related events, programs, and businesses begin to create an atmosphere that a business manager most aptly described as “green is cool.” Thus, the combination of the community events and the raised social consciousness described by participants helped create a social norm around sustainability broadly. The existence of this social norm is reflected in many of the participants' responses. For instance, the vast majority of IGBA and non-IGBA businesses felt that the certificate would improve their public image. Even businesses that were clearly uninterested in certification acknowledged that it was a “noble cause.” Furthermore, both IGBA and non-IGBA businesses referenced the certificate and the “green movement” in general as something to aspire to be a part of. Although not a uniform sentiment, overall the community context was described by participants as reflecting the existence of a social norm in which sustainability is positive, and thus an EC was positive as well.

Fragmentation of efforts.

The last key piece that emerged as integral to the Champaign-Urbana's business community context is the fragmentation of sustainability-related efforts. Across CRA and business interviews, participants' perceptions of efforts differed for Champaign and Urbana, between the government and private sectors, and between the University and the community at

large. Champaign and Urbana were often described separately, and several participants inquired whether the interview questions were referring to Urbana *or* Champaign. One business owner made a clear distinction between the communities:

If we were in downtown Urbana, I think there'd be very little negative and almost all positives. I think it's a little different for us here [in Champaign]... I mean, just quite honestly, [green store] is in Urbana. It's the land of Birkenstocks... This is brand new to Champaign. And I know that sounds crazy, because we're talking about a couple of miles, here.

This interviewee expressed what several others implied. Furthermore, CRA participants representing one community were unable to make any comments or share any knowledge about the other.

This divide was also present between city government and businesses. Government representatives perceived little action on the part of private sector leaders with respect to sustainability. In contrast, private sector leaders seemed to have slightly greater awareness of government initiatives, but their knowledge of the government initiatives was still limited. Lastly, although the University was depicted as a great resource and a significant influence on the community, the University was also considered largely inaccessible by community businesses. Thus, the fragmentation results from the fact that there are efforts and an overall movement toward sustainability in each sector of the community, yet each seemed to have the impression that they were largely working toward this effort alone.

These multiple divides within the community were recognized by CRA interviewees. One participant explained that CCnet was established in an attempt to bridge some of these divides by providing a forum for all to come together and discuss sustainability issues. However,

the interviewee explained the organization was still in its infancy at the time of the interview and there continued to exist an overall lack of communication between sectors.

In sum, a community sense of sustainability existed that focused on health, energy, and the local economy, to the exclusion of business sustainability. Nevertheless, because of the variety of community efforts, programs, government initiatives and positive media coverage about sustainability, a positive community context exists around the topic of sustainability. Furthermore, the community context is one in which a social norm has developed, indicating that “green is cool.” However, current efforts are hindered by the various divides between communities, government and businesses, and between the University and the community. Within this context, businesses operate, consider, seek, and receive the environmental certification.

Integration of Theories

In this section I address research question 2: How have SM and CRM contributed to an exploration of businesses’ sustainability practices at the local level? First, I address how specific components of each theory have shaped the study. Next, I bring out more complexity by showing the value of the theories working in conjunction with one another to bring out aspects of the phenomenon that would not have emerged otherwise.

The CRM forms the methodological base of this study through its emphasis on community-based and collaborative work. It provides a framework for how to assess the community’s stage of readiness to address the issue. The CRM recognizes that each community is unique and has its own set of strengths and problem areas. By collaborating with a community organization, I ensured the study was able to address the specific concerns of the community.

Thus, the CRM allows the community's influence and knowledge to regain their central role in this research. Moreover, with the help of the IGBA, I was able to select participants based on their knowledge of local sustainability efforts.

The CRA requires interviewing a broad range of people who are knowledgeable about a given issue. This allowed me to arrive at critical insights about the relationship between the community and business sustainability practices. The challenge in this area of study was that there were few leaders on business sustainability, and those who were working on the issue tended to work together creating small circles and pools of information, thus providing very similar information. To be certain that no "pools" of information were being missed it was important to get the perspective of individuals working in different sectors, government, media, and any other large presence in the community, such as the University of Illinois.

Social Marketing provided the conceptual framework for the study. Through the business interviews, guided by social marketing principles, I was able to gain an alternative vantage point than that offered by the CRA interviews. The goal of researchers using Social Marketing is always change for a social good. The key to the piece of social marketing used for this study was to gain a thorough understanding of the barriers and motivators local businesses perceived toward EC. These interviews provided invaluable community-specific information that was otherwise unavailable in the published literature.

Individually these models work well, each adding a unique valuable component and together providing a broad view of the phenomenon. However, this study brought to light that by integrating the theories, the resulting insights amounted to more than the sum of results obtained through each theory alone. In using the CRM and SM the community context was clearer, as there were multiple perspectives to draw on. The social norm around sustainability became more

evident as did the fragmentation in the community. In addition, the CRA provided a critical context that the business representatives were then able to provide their own perspective on. At times these perspectives were in accordance with each other, and other times there were significant differences between them. For instance, the CRA participants were knowledgeable about a variety of efforts available to promote business sustainability, whereas few of the businesses were aware of these. Further, CRA interviewees could provide information about larger initiatives that were being planned that would ultimately reach businesses, but businesses were unaware of these as of yet. Whereas some government representatives perceived a lack of interest on the part of businesses to engage in sustainability, the results of the business interviews revealed that a lack of time was a far larger barrier than interest in EC. Thus, the combination of theories allowed for valuable insights into how the community operates and the multitude of perceptions that exist in that context.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Environmental certifications are a promising solution to help businesses reduce their environmental impact. It is rare, however, for small businesses to participate in these certifications because most are national and trade-specific certification programs, which are best suited for large businesses. Thus, locally-based ECs are an excellent alternative to engage small businesses in greener practices. However, the literature on locally based ECs is in its infancy. This qualitative study attempted to address a critical gap in the research literature by examining Champaign-Urbana's business community's readiness to engage in sustainable practices.

In this section, I first discuss the CRA findings in light of the results from the business interviews, and explain the implications of these combined results for the IGBA's certification program. Next, I discuss differing views on the scope of sustainability that emerged from the interviews, and bring to light some issues that arose from the business interviews that contradict traditional business paradigms. I will describe how the study contributes to the literature by (a) finding that the community context is influential in businesses' decision to obtain an EC, (b) extending the literature on barriers and motivators toward certification, (c) exploring how businesses in a pilot EC program are unique and, (d) implementing a unique combination of theories that are transferable to other investigations and communities. Lastly, I provide a discussion of the limitations of the study, and implications for future research.

Intersections and Implications of CRA and Business Interviews

The CRA and the business interviews were conducted with different populations and were intended to elicit different information about the business community. However, the points of intersection in the interviews provide valuable information. In this section I will describe these

points of intersection and indicate how the CRM and SM's suggested strategies for change could be applied to the Champaign-Urbana community.

The results of the CRA indicated the Champaign-Urbana community was in the preplanning stage (i.e., stage 4), to address business sustainability, a finding that was largely supported by the business interviews. Based on the CRM, the primary goal at the preplanning stage should be to raise awareness in the larger community around the issue of improving business sustainability. In fact, business interviewees were largely unaware of existing efforts. Thus, consistent with the CRM's suggested strategy, the community would benefit from increased media exposure and marketing of the issue, as well as marketing of the resources available to address business sustainability. Small organizations that help to represent business interests like the Urbana Business Association could help significantly to increase exposure of the topic as well as provide access to resources to help businesses green their practices.

Social Marketing also places a great deal of importance on marketing to increase awareness and promote behavior change. However, SM goes further by emphasizing the need for targeted and population specific marketing. The findings from the business interviews indicate that even among business that share an interest in green practices, there are sub-groups present that would require different marketing strategies. For instance, marketing the EC to born green businesses should focus on providing customers proof against green washing, as well as adding credibility to their public image. Marketing for businesses interested in green practices that have not incorporated such practices yet should focus on fulfilling the owner or manager's sense of responsibility of "doing what's right" for the community and the environment. Lastly, all businesses are enticed by the prospect of financial savings, thus this can be incorporated into all EC marketing efforts.

A hindering factor brought to light specifically by the CRA interviews was the fragmentation of sustainability initiatives among the different sectors (i.e., public, private, and academic). As indicated by the CRM, community groups working toward similar goals can be made significantly stronger through better awareness of each other's services and resources. In essence, a stronger network must be formed among those who are working toward sustainability. For example, more efforts could be invested in further developing CCnet, the community organization that started to address the communication gaps in the community. A focus group could be formed to brainstorm community-based solutions to form stronger alliances between the various sectors.

Given that business representatives perceived Champaign's city government as less interested in sustainability than Urbana's, Champaign's efforts toward sustainability should be communicated more effectively to the business community. An excellent way for the city government to show support for sustainable business is to provide incentives in the form of grants, tax deductions, or rebates for sustainability-related business investments. Nearly all business participants agreed that by offering these incentives, the local government would act as a strong motivating factor to engage in sustainable practices.

In terms of community context, most CRA participants and business representatives perceived a positive and supportive community for business sustainability. Interestingly, IGBA businesses described the community's interest and support of green business practices with more enthusiasm and perceived more support for EC than CRA participants. It is possible that the positive attention IGBA businesses received for pursuing the EC from customers and media enhanced their perception of the community's support for business sustainability. In contrast, non-IGBA businesses' perceptions of community support were mixed, possibly because they had

not received positive feedback from the community around the EC as IGBA businesses had. Capitalizing on the certified businesses' positive experiences through increased media exposure could also form part of the strategy to increase awareness on the issue, as recommended by the CRM.

Lastly, many IGBA and non-IGBA businesses reported a sense of responsibility to the environment as an important motivating force to obtain certification. Although these businesses appreciated monetary incentives as well, more important to them was their reputation and public image. Thus, to further encourage businesses with similar interests and values, continued recognition through media and social events would be an excellent way to validate participating businesses' efforts as well as entice businesses who may be interested but not yet committed to the EC to participate.

Differing Views on Scope of Sustainability

Qualitative work reveals worlds of knowledge and experience. In the process, it contributes to a deeper understanding of issues, but it also inevitably raises a plethora of new questions. This study revealed differing views on the scope of sustainability, a central issue that merits further exploration and understanding. I describe these varying perspectives and provide some suggested strategies to broaden the community's concept of sustainability.

This study used as its foundation a broad understanding of sustainability, encompassing three critical and interconnected areas: the economy, the environment, and society (i.e., social well-being, health, and equity). A finding of the study was that the Champaign-Urbana community had its own developing sense of sustainability that centered on health and energy conservation. Businesses' contribution to a sustainable or unsustainable community was not yet a part of the community's sense of sustainability. Thus, the role businesses could play in a

sustainable community was not an issue of which the community had great awareness. On the other hand, the businesses interviewed primarily focused their green practices on their environmental impact, particularly energy conservation, and rarely mentioned the social and health impacts of their efforts. Thus, a critical missing piece of understanding for both community members and businesses is that the consequences of businesses' unsustainable actions are linked not only to the environment and the economy, but also to the well-being of community members.

There are several possible strategies to ameliorate the disconnect between businesses' environmental practices and community well-being. It is critical to address both the businesses' and the overall community's perspective of sustainability. Focusing on what certified businesses have accomplished could help draw the attention of other business owners as well as the public to the importance of sustainable business practices for community well-being. For example, the IGBA could create positive publicity around how certified businesses' waste reduction reduces toxins in the air and water, and how eliminating use of harsh cleaning chemicals improves the work environment of employees. Businesses' greener practices could be logged and displayed for customers with brief descriptions on how the changes benefit the community at large. Certified businesses could feature postings of their improved air quality in an area that is easily visible to the public. A strategy to get community members involved is to hold discussion forums where community members are encouraged to voice concerns about business practices and community well-being, allowing for follow-up discussions on strategies to address the issues brought up. In addition, a booth could be placed at the Urbana farmer's market providing information about the importance of green business practices to improve community well-being.

As a general principle, I suggest making all efforts positively oriented. History has shown that marketing focused on negatives and consequences is largely unsuccessful. In this community in particular, anything that could be perceived as judging those who are not acting green would only further the belief in “green judgment” and alienate citizens and business owners alike. Using the strategies described, business owners would be able to see more clearly how they may contribute to a sustainable community through greener practices, and community members can encourage businesses to implement greener practices.

Breaking Business Paradigms

The interviews with business owners and managers indicate that some of the businesses in the Champaign-Urbana community are challenging some typical business paradigms. I describe these here and provide possible explanations. Perhaps the most unexpected finding from the business interviews was the idea that EC was seen as the right thing to do by many participants. I had not anticipated the recurring response from businesses describing motivators such as “feeling good” or “it’s the right thing to do.” However, it is unclear whether the participants described it as “right” because of environmental concerns, a sense of social or personal responsibility, or for other reasons altogether. Nevertheless, the theme that emerged around participants’ beliefs that EC fulfilled a sense of responsibility was an important motivating factor.

The interviews also revealed that many business owners felt a strong sense of connection to their community and their customers. At the end of the day, business owners or managers were community members as well. Yet, CRA participants did not describe businesses as being connected to their community. Rather, businesses were described by one participant as “their own entity,” suggesting a degree of disconnect that was not reflected in the interviews with

business owners and managers. This is one of the few instances in which the CRA and business interviews revealed opposing information. It is unclear why the community leaders on sustainability would have this perception of their local businesses. A possible explanation is that the businesses interviewed for this study represent a minority of local businesses in terms of their interest in green business practices and their connectedness to the community. In addition, CRA participants may have interacted mainly with a different type of business than those interviewed for this study.

Another unexpected finding from the business interviews was that some businesses were cooperating rather than competing with each other. This extends and supports the idea of business owners who identify equally as community members, befriend other owners, and work to help each other whenever needed. Thus, these businesses are acting more like a traditional community than individual entities trying to survive on their own. The notion of a “business community” created by a group of local businesses that interact, communicate, and network with each other, is a rare finding in the business literature, as it is often reported that such a community does not exist (Curran, Rutherford, & Smith, 2000). This is a significant finding first because it is so rare in the business community, but also because these collaborations and mutual support help a business to thrive. It is a different model of operation altogether from the traditional business model.

I believe all of these “unusual” business characteristics are related. All the business owners or managers live and work in their community. They see their employees and customers daily and are intimately familiar with the workings of their business. This is perhaps characteristic of small businesses, but having their business in a relatively small community (as compared to large cities) enables a stronger sense of community to develop. It allows the

business owners to know their “neighbors” and befriend them. Business owners’ sense of connection to their community and to other business owners may encourage a stronger sense of responsibility toward their community, thus cultivating a desire to do what is “right” for their local environment and community.

The Importance of Community Context

A major contribution of this study is the finding that the community context is influential to local businesses’ engagement in an EC program. Community for the purposes of this study was defined by geography and encompasses all of the Champaign-Urbana area and its various components (i.e., community members, business, community organizations, government, educational institutions). The existing literature on EC does not recognize the community context as an influential factor, as almost all certifications represented in the literature are national or industry specific. Thus, it was important to shed light on the relation between a local EC program and local businesses.

Consistent with the literature, this study found that customers’ needs, demands, and expectations were a highly influential factor for businesses’ interest in EC (Harris & Crane, 2002; New, 1999). Similarly, the actions of competitors were also influential to some of the participating businesses, although not to the degree described in the literature (Harris & Crane, 2002; Tilley, 1999). Not represented in the literature is the finding that other non-competing businesses within the community can also be influential. For instance, the support of other “green-minded” businesses was cited as a motivator, as well as interacting with other businesses similarly engaged in green practices. Furthermore, a business owner or manager’s perception of the community’s interest in and support for green practices was also found to be influential in the pursuit of EC. In Champaign-Urbana, all the IGBA businesses reported that the community

context was a motivating factor in their obtaining the certification. Thus, a significant contribution of this study is the finding that community-specific factors are influential in businesses' decision to obtain the EC.

Consistent with the literature, business representatives considered public image a highly motivating factor (Michael, Echols, & Bukowski, 2010). Based on the present findings, I posit that the valuation of public image is embedded within a community context. Public image has much to do with a business's reputation, and because all the businesses interviewed were local businesses, public image was directly related to how the local community sees their business. If businesses perceive the certification as beneficial to their image, this requires the assumption that the community values and thinks positively of the certification. Thus, the conceptualization of public image as an element of community context is a contribution of this study.

Influential factors toward environmental certification

The results of the current study support the existing literature indicating that time and financial restrictions are common barriers, and cost savings is a motivating factor, for EC (Bianchi & Noci, 1998; Harris & Crane, 2002; Michael, Echols, & Bukowski, 2010; Tilley, 1999). However, the results of the current study also extend what is widely found in the extant literature on influential factors toward EC. Motivating actors frequently cited such as access to a larger consumer market (i.e., the green market), regulatory compliance, and industry incentives were perceived as largely inconsequential by the participants. Instead, for many business representatives interviewed, the primary barriers and motivators were either related to internal business matters (e.g., a business's value orientation, financial issues) or related to a community factor (i.e., perception of community support or insufficient consumer demand).

The literature on factors influencing interest in EC recognizes a sense of moral duty and concern for the environment as a motivating factor (Guében & Skerratt 2007), which was also found in this study as a sense of responsibility. For instance, motivating factors such as taking on a leadership role, the “feel good factor,” and obtaining certification because “it is the right thing to do,” were cited repeatedly by participants. However, the findings of this study indicate that the sense of responsibility among participants was a particularly strong theme and was brought up repeatedly. In contrast the literature does not recognize a sense of moral duty as a primary motivator, as was found in this study.

Pilot businesses

The participants of the IGBA business interviews were a very unique group of businesses, in that they were the pilot businesses for the IGBA certification program. These businesses represent a small minority of businesses, yet they are a critical segment because they are leaders in business sustainability in the community. Thus, it is particularly valuable to understand their motives and points of view, as early adopters of EC are needed for new community-based EC programs developing across the country. At the time the businesses were in the pilot program, there were few monetary incentives available to encourage their participation, further supporting many of their statements that among their primary motivators were feeling that obtaining the EC was the right thing to do.

This group of businesses was quite different from most businesses described in the literature, which are often grouped by industry, tend to be large, and may or may not already have green practices implemented. It is likely because of the demographics of the IGBA businesses that some notable differences were found between the literature and the results of this study. For instance, businesses’ strong sense of responsibility toward the environment, and the

prevailing perception that the community was supportive of EC as motivating factors, were likely related to the specific characteristics of the pilot group. Furthermore, a theme emerged among the group of businesses that I denoted as born green businesses (i.e., those that were founded on green practices), reflecting that their motivation to obtain the certification was somewhat different than that of other businesses. The born green businesses' sense of doing the right thing seemed to already have been satisfied by running a green business, thus a more important motivator for them was demonstrating consistency to their customers by obtaining the certification. Although the born green businesses have much in common with businesses aspiring to be green, when marketing a new EC program, it seems logical that this subgroup would require a slightly different marketing strategy than the businesses aspiring to be green and still seeking to fulfill their sense of responsibility. For instance, the born green businesses would be more likely to respond to a marketing strategy focused on providing credibility to their already green efforts and reducing concerns about green wash. In contrast, marketing to businesses with a general green interest should appeal to their sense of environmental responsibility as well as highlight the potential cost savings associated with EC.

A Unique Methodology

The methodology used in this study was an integration of two theories, Social Marketing and the Community Readiness Model. This unique combination of theories allowed for a broader understanding of the community context. The use of this methodology contributes to the literature by providing a model of an effective methodology that can be replicated in communities across the country. The model is highly flexible and applicable to nearly any community, both small and large, that has interest in developing a local EC program. The model is born from a community effort to address the issue, and provides community-specific results

that highlight a community's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the specific needs and perceptions of local businesses. The findings from both the CRA and the business interviews provide critical information for the development of a local EC program that is founded on empirical findings. Thus, the model is an excellent tool for any community that has interest in developing their own EC program.

Limitations of the Study

Although the CRM and SM worked well together, the study would have been strengthened by incorporating more sustainability-specific elements into the CRA and the business interviews. For example, it would have been valuable to have more information about how participants viewed the different components of sustainability (i.e., energy use, waste reduction, water usage), and to know which area they perceived to provide the greatest challenge to their sustainability efforts. This would have been important because in the Champaign-Urbana community there has been a great deal of attention focused on energy use and recycling, with less attention paid to water consumption or to concerns over toxins in the air, land, or water. Thus, inclusion of this piece would allow for the integration of the CRM and SM to be better tailored to business sustainability in particular.

In addition, interviews with community leaders and business representatives provided important perspectives for understanding the community context in which businesses operate. However, a small group of interviews with "green consumers" would have added another layer of depth to the picture of the community. CRA participants and business interviewees had well-formed ideas of community members and customers' attitudes toward green businesses. These perceptions, in turn, influenced their decisions related to sustainable practices. Thus, it would have been valuable to compare businesses' perceptions of their customers' views with what their

customers actually believed. Furthermore, it would have been valuable to know customers' perceptions of an EC, such as whether certification was something they valued as some businesses believed, or whether certification was inconsequential in customers' decision about where to shop, as other businesses reported.

Implications for Future Studies

The current study sheds light on businesses' sustainability practices, also raising new questions for future studies. For instance, this study offered support for the notion that the community context is influential in businesses' decision to be certified. Business representatives cited a variety of perceptions of the community's receptiveness and support for an EC. However, a question raised by this study is "How does community context influence the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of the individuals deciding on an EC for their business?" This information would be valuable in further understanding how various aspects of the community context influence decision makers. These findings would further the literature on how best to market locally-based EC programs to the business decision makers.

Another issue raised by this study was the fragmentation of sustainability efforts within the community, i.e., between the Champaign and Urbana community, between the private and government sector, and between the University and the Urbana-Champaign community. Although there were efforts in place beginning to bridge these gaps such as CCnet, many CRA participants perceived that the sector of the community they represented was working largely independently. Nevertheless, several sectors were actively pursuing sustainability initiatives. Some ties between the sectors did exist, which combined with their initiatives represented a strength of the community. This strength allowed me (as a research student) to collaborate with a community organization to investigate the topic.

The academic-community gap in particular would be amenable to further investigation. A basic Internet search revealed multiple community-based EC initiatives, yet there is no representation of these in the business or community literatures. The lack of research in this area leads to the questions: Is the lack of academic research on community-based EC programs an indication of a nationwide fragmentation between academic institutions and their home communities? Thus, if Champaign-Urbana, a community with moderate fragmentation was able to support a community-University of Illinois collaboration around business sustainability, is a lack of research around local EC programs and business sustainability an indication that much deeper fragmentation exists in other communities? Or alternatively, is this area of research being taken up by private research organizations? In either case, bridging the gap between the resources available through an academic institution and the overall community's efforts to move business sustainability forward could be very productive in improving the existing knowledge base on best practices for local EC programs, as well as helping to move community efforts toward sustainability forward.

In conclusion, this study offered findings that were both readily applicable as well as contributed empirically to the literature. The fields of business, psychology, and sustainability rarely meet, yet knowledge from all these areas was necessary for the current study. I believe this study showcased that when multiple fields of knowledge are merged successfully the result can be synergistic. It is my hope that this study will serve as a template for further research on community-based EC programs, as such programs are crucial to helping small business's green their practices. Small businesses face many challenges, but with the help of well-developed local EC programs, being environmentally conscious should not be one of those challenges.

REFERENCES

- Ambec, S., & Lanoie, P. (2008). Does it pay to be green? A systematic overview. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 22(4), 45 - 62.
- Bianchi, R., & Noci, G. (1998). "Greening" SMEs' competitiveness. *Small Business Economics*, 11, 269 - 281.
- Brown, L. (1984). *State of the World 1984: A worldwatch institute report on progress toward a sustainable society*. NY: Worldwatch Institute.
- Bryson, J. M. (2004). *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons.
- Business Roundtable Sustainability Report. (2010). *Enhancing our commitment to a sustainable future*. Retrieved on May 1, 2010, from www.greenbiz.com/research/report/2010/04/22/enhancing-our-commitment-sustainable-future
- Carroll, A. B. (1991). The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: Toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders. *Business Horizons*, 34, 39-48.
- Carroll, A. B. (1994). Social issues in management research: Experts' views, analysis and commentary. *Business & Society*, 33, 5-29.
- Clemens, B. (2006). Economic incentives and small firms: Does it pay to be green? *Journal of Business Research*, 59, 492 - 500.
- Champaign County Regional Planning Commission. (2009). Champaign County Demographic Profile. Retrieved on May 4, 2010, from www.champaigncountyedc.org/DemographicProfile%202009.pdf

- Conservation and Community Investment Forum. (2002). Analysis of the status of current certification schemes in promoting conservation. San Francisco, CA: Author.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124 – 130.
- Curran, J., Rutherford, R., & Smith, S. L. (2000). Is there a local business community? *Local Economy, 15*(2), 128 – 143.
- Donnermeyer, J. F., Plested, B. A., Edwards, R. W., Oetting, G., & Littlethunder, L. (1997). Community readiness and prevention programs. *Journal of Community Development Society, 28*, 65 – 83.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Durlap, J. A., & DuPre, E. P. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*, 327 - 350.
- Edwards, R. W., Jumper-Thurman, P., Plested, B. A., Oetting, E. R., & Swanson, L. (2000). Community readiness: Research to practice. *Journal of Community Psychology, 28*(3), 291 – 307.
- Edwards, A. R. (2005). *The sustainability revolution: Portrait of a paradigm shift*. Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Ely, M., Anzul, M., Friedman, T., Garner, D., & McCormack-Steinmetz, A. (1991). *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles*. London: Falmer Press.

- European Commission. (2010). *SME definition*. Retrieved on April 13, 2010, from http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm
- Gardner, G. T., & Stern, P. C. (2008). The short list: the most effective actions U.S. households can take to curb climate change. *Environment*, 50(5), 12 - 24.
- Guében, C., & Skerratt, R. G. (2007). SMEs and environmental communications: motivations and barriers to environmental reporting. *International Journal of Environment and Sustainable Development*, 6(1), 1 - 16.
- Harris, L. C., & Crane, A. (2002). The greening of organizational culture. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15(3), 214 – 234.
- Kelly, K. J., Plested, B. A., Edwards, R. W., Jumper Thurman, P., Comello, M. L. G., & Slater, M. D. (2003). The community readiness model: A complementary approach to social marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 3(4), 411 – 426.
- Kotler, P., & Lee, N. R. (2008). *Social Marketing: Influencing behaviors for good*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Legot, C., London, B., & Shandra, J. (2010). *The proximity of high volume developmental neurotoxin pollutants to schools: Vulnerable populations at risk*. Political Economy Research Institute: Amherst, MA: Author.
- Lewis, J. (1985). The birth of EPA. *EPA Journal*. Retrieved on July 10, 2009, from <http://www.epa.gov/history/topics/epa/15c.htm>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Maibach, E.W., Rothschild, M. L., & Novelli, W. D. (2002). Social marketing. In K. Glanz, B. K. Rimer, & F. M. Lewis (Eds.), *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed., pp. 437-461). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Manget, J., Roche, C., & Munnich, F. (2009). *Capturing the Green Advantage for Consumer Companies*. Boston Consulting Group: Author.
- Markham, V. D. (2008). *U.S. population, energy, & climate change*. Center for Environment and Population. Retrieved on October 24, 2008, from <http://www.cepnet.org/>
- Masurel, E. (2007). Why SMEs invest in environmental measures: Sustainability evidence from small and medium-sized printing firms. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 16, 190 - 201.
- McKenzie-Mohr, D. & Smith, W. (1999). *Fostering sustainable behavior: An introduction to community based social marketing*. New Society Publishers: BC, Canada.
- Michael, J. H., Echols, A. E., & Bukowski, S. (2010). Executive perceptions of adopting an environmental certification program. *Business Strategy and the Environment*. doi: 10.1002/bse.665
- Miller, N. J. & Besser, T. L. (2000). The importance of community values in small business strategy formation: evidence from rural Iowa. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 38(1), 68 - 85.
- Montiel, I. (2008). Corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability: separate pasts, common futures. *Organization & Environment*, 21, 245 - 269.
- Morrow, S. L., & Smith, M. L. (2000). Qualitative research for counseling psychology. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of Counseling Psychology* (p. 199 -230). NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Natural Resources Defense Council. (1997). *The story of silent spring*. Retrieved on June 17, 2009, from <http://www.nrdc.org/health/pesticides/hcarson.asp>
- Pastor, M., Sadd, J. & Hipp, J. (2001). Which came first? Toxic facilities, minority move-in, and environmental justice. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 23(1), 1 - 21.
- Peattie, K., & Crane, A. (2005). Green marketing: Legend, myth, farce or prophesy? *Qualitative Market Research*, 8(4), 357 – 370.
- Pew Charitable Trusts. (2009). *Pew finds clean energy economy generates significant job growth*. Retrieved on June 15, 2009, from http://www.pewtrusts.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=53254
- Plested, B. A., Edwards, R. W., & Jumper-Thurman, P. (2006). *Community Readiness: A handbook for successful change*. Fort Collins, CO: Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research.
- Post, J. E., & Altman, B. W. (1994). Managing the environmental change process: Barriers and opportunities. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 7(4), 64 - 81.
- Prochaska, J. O. (1979). *Systems of Psychotherapy: A Transtheoretical Analysis*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole.
- Prochaska, J. O., Redding, C. A., Evers, K. E. (2002). The transtheoretical model and stages of change. In K. Glanz, B. K. Rimer, & F. M. Lewis (Eds.) *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice* (pp.99 - 120) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Prochaska, J. O., Redding, C. A., Harlow, L. L., Rossi, J. S., & Velicer, W. F. (1994). The transtheoretical model of change and HIV prevention: A review. *Health Education & Behavior*, 21(4), 471 – 486.

- Quazi, H. A., Khoo, Y., Tan, C., & Wong, P. (2001). Motivation for ISO 14000 certification: development of a predictive model. *International Journal of Management Science*, 29, 525 - 542.
- Roth, B. (2008, Oct 24). It pays to go green in a down economy. Entrepreneur.com. Retrieved on June 15, 2009 from <http://www.entrepreneur.com/management/greencolumnistbillroth/article198182.html>
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative Interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rutherford, R., Blackburn, R. A., & Spence, L. J. (2000). Environmental management and the small firm: An international comparison. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 6(6), 310 - 322.
- Schaper, M. (2002). The essence of ecopreneurship. *Greener Management International*, 38, 26 - 30.
- Schmuck, P., & Schultz P. W. (2002). Sustainable development as a challenge for psychology. In P. Schmuck & W. P. Schultz (Eds.), *Psychology of sustainable development* (pp. 3 - 17). Boston: Kluwer Academic Press.
- Sierra Club. (2009). *John Muir exhibit*. Retrieved on July 10, 2009, from http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/
- Silverman, M., Marshall, R. S., & Cordano, M. (2005). The greening of the California wine industry: Implications for regulators and industry associations. *Journal of Wine Research*, 16(2), 151 - 169.

- Slater, M. D., Kelly, K., & Edwards, R. (2000). Integrating social marketing, community readiness and media advocacy in community-based prevention efforts. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 1(3), 125 – 137.
- Spencer, L., Pagell, F., & Adams, T. (2005). Applying the transtheoretical model to cancer screening behavior. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 29(1), 36 - 56.
- Stith, S., Pruitt, I., Dees, J., Fronce, M., Green, N., Som, A., & Linkh, D. (2006). Implementing community-based prevention programming: A review of the literature. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 27(6), 599 - 617.
- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. (2008). *Sustainable*. Retrieved September 30, 2008, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sustainable>
- Tilley, F. (1999). The gap between the environmental attitudes and the environmental behavior of small firms. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 8, 238 - 248.
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (n.d.). *Feeling the heat*. Retrieved September 30, 2008, from <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2007). *2007 County Business Patterns (NAICS) Champaign, IL*. Retrieved on April 30, 2010, from <http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/cbpnaic/cbpsect.pl>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2008). *Educational Attainment by Selected Characteristics: 2008*. Retrieved on May 4, 2010, from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/education.html>
- U.S. Energy Information Administration (2009). Use of energy in the United States Explained. Retrieved on March 15, 2009, from http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/energyexplained/index.cfm?page=us_energy_use

- U. S. Small Business Association. (2009). *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved on April 3, 2010, from <http://www.sba.gov/advo/stats/sbfaq.pdf>
- U.S. Small Business Association. (2008). *Table of Small Business Size Standards Matched to North American Industry Classification System Codes*. Retrieved on April 3, 2010, from <http://www.sba.gov/contractingopportunities/officials/size/index.html>
- Vandergeest, P. (2007). Certification and communities: Alternatives for regulating the environmental and social impacts of shrimp farming. *World Development*, 35(7), 1152 – 1171.
- Vining, J. & Ebreo, A. (2002). Emerging theoretical and methodological perspectives on conservation behavior. In R. Bechtel & A. Churchman (Eds.), *The new handbook of environmental psychology*, (pp. 541-558). New York: John Wiley.
- Vos, R. O. (2007). Perspective defining sustainability: a conceptual orientation. *Journal of Chemical Technology and Biotechnology*, 82, 334 – 339.
- Walley, E. E., & Taylor, D. W. (2002). Opportunists, champions, mavericks...? A typology of green entrepreneurs. *Greener Management International*, 38, 31 - 43.
- Willers, B. (Ed.). (1991). *Learning to Listen to the Land*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- World Health Organization. (2003). Climate change and human health - risks and responses. Retrieved on February 20, 2011 from <http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/cchhbook/en/>

Wynne, R. D. (1994). The emperor's new eco-logos?: A critical review of the scientific certification systems environmental report card and the green seal certification mark programs. *Virginia Environmental Law Journal*, 15, 51 - 149

APPENDIX A: IGBA BUSINESS INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Position: Owner Manager Other _____
2. Sector: Restaurant Retail Office Other _____
3. Approximate time in Champaign-Urbana: _____
4. Number of staff/employees: _____

Affiliation w/IGBA

- Enrolled; how long _____
- Certified; how long _____
- Other _____

II. BUSINESS INTERVIEW

A. Meaning

1. When you hear the term “green business” or “environmentally sustainable business” what comes to mind?
2. When I say “green business certification,” what comes to mind?

B. External Barriers & Motivators

3. What factors specific to the Champaign-Urbana community make it difficult to be green certified? (*prompt: can think of laws, regulations, type of consumers, other businesses*)
4. What factors specific to the Champaign-Urbana community make it more appealing or enticing for a business to pursue being green certified (*prompt type of residents/consumers*)?
 - a. Are there any incentives for becoming green certified? (*These can be local or national, government sponsored etc. anything that might motivate a business to want the certification, can be concrete like tax breaks or non-tangible like community support and positive attention*).
 - b. If not, what incentives would be appealing?

C. Internal Barriers & Motivators

5. What are the main reasons your business was interested in the green business certification?
6. What value does getting the certification have for you business?
7. Was there anything specific to your business that makes/made it difficult to get green certification? (*Prompt: paperwork, financial issues*)
8. What part of the certification process has been/was most challenging?

D. Experience (*if not already discussed*)

9. What has the experience of getting the green business certification been like overall?
10. Was there anything that was/has been especially helpful throughout the process?
11. What areas could use improvement?
12. Do/Did any of these factors influence your interest in becoming green certified?

Please explain briefly. *Only ask about if not previously discussed.*

✓ or x	Factor	Notes
	Industry	
	Regulations	
	Preparation for future regulations	
	Stakeholders	
	Community climate and support	
	Customers: support; needs/demands; access to larger consumer market	
	Competitors (actions, competitive advantage)	
	Cost of getting certified	
	Implementing changes required by certification	
	Operating costs	
	Time	
	Staff/employees: (training time; support or resistance)	
	Attracting good workers	
	Working conditions	
	Environmental concerns (businesses environmental impact)	
	Public image	

APPENDIX B: NON-IGBA BUSINESS INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Position: Owner Manager Other _____
2. Business Sector: Restaurant Retail Office Other

3. Approximate time in Champaign-Urbana: _____
4. Number of staff/employees: _____
5. Relation with Illinois Green Business Association:
 None Interested in enrolling Other _____

II. BUSINESS INTERVIEW

A. Meaning

1. When you hear the term “green business” or “environmentally sustainable business” what comes to mind?
2. When I say green business certification, what comes to mind?

Here provide brief explanation of green business certification if markedly different from own definition: By green certification, I mean a business certification given for completing specific environmental requirements. These usually include attending to reduced energy use, limiting waste generation, and pollution prevention among other things.

B. Internal Barriers & Motivators

3. Is green certification something that you may be interested or have considered for your business? Please explain.
4. *If not answered by question above:* What do you expect are some of the challenges toward getting green certification?
5. What are some of the benefits of green certification?

C. External Barriers & Motivators

6. What factors specific to the Champaign-Urbana community make being green certified unappealing? (*prompt: can think of laws, regulations, type of consumers, other businesses*)
7. What factors specific to the Champaign-Urbana community make it more appealing or enticing for a business to pursue being green certified (*prompt type of residents/consumers*)?

- a. Are there any incentives for becoming green certified? *(These can be local or national, government sponsored etc. anything that might motivate a business to want the certification, can be concrete like tax breaks or non-tangible like community support and positive attention).*
- b. If not, what incentives would be appealing?
8. If you were interested in making your business more green or sustainable, are there any business support services that could help you (these could be local, regional, or even national)?
9. Do any of these factors influence your interest in green certification? Please explain briefly. *Only ask about if not previously discussed.*

✓ or x	Factor	Notes
	Industry	
	Regulations	
	Preparation for future regulations	
	Stakeholders	
	Community climate and support	
	Customers: support; needs/demands; access to larger consumer market	
	Competitors (actions, competitive advantage)	
	Cost of getting certified	
	Implementing changes required by certification	
	Operating costs	
	Time	
	Staff/employees: (training time; support or resistance)	
	Attracting good workers	
	Working conditions	
	Environmental concerns (businesses environmental impact)	
	Public image	