The Pennsylvania State University
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College of Education

TRANSLATING OVERSEAS STUDENT TEACHING TO FIRST YEAR

TEACHING: AN EXPLORATION

A Dissertation in
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by
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This dissertation examines the experiences of five first year teachers who completed their student teaching practicum in Trondheim, Norway. The research explores the ways in which overseas student teaching impacts the practices of first-year teachers in four specific domains:

1. Sustainability in the classroom
2. Worldview in the classroom
3. Place in the classroom
4. The effectiveness of an overseas student teaching experience

Each of the five participants was interviewed a total of seven times over a period of four months. The interviews gathered information pertaining to the following research questions:

1. How does an overseas student teaching experience effect first year teachers’ conceptualization of place?
2. How does an overseas student teaching experience effect first-year teachers’ conceptualization of sustainability?
3. How does an overseas student teaching experience effect first-year teachers’ conceptualization of worldview?

4. How does this infiltrate their teaching practices?

Although the participants all felt that the overseas experience increased their personal understanding of the three distinct topics, the ways in which their teaching practice was impacted differed from person to person. Two participants teaching in traditional public schools did not feel comfortable supplementing their largely prescribed curricula with material in these domains. One participant continued teaching overseas and found his students to be lacking the English fluency necessary to discuss these topics. As a substitute teacher, one participant took every opportunity to include these issues in the daily lesson plan. And the final participant taught in an outdoor science school that encouraged exploration of these topics.

Future research opportunities are abundant. Continued dialogue with these five participants could potentially yield a longitudinal study exploring how practice changes over time. Furthermore, additional studies of first-year teachers who completed student teaching overseas would add to the understanding of how this experience impacts the practices of a beginning teacher.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

A Background Story

My student teaching experience was a pivotal moment that could have broken one of two ways. In my final act of teacher preparation before I was to begin my career as an educator, I was struck by the reality of what I faced. Because my initial certification was 6-12 English/Language Arts, my student teaching was separated into two sections. Of the 18 weeks spent in the program, the first nine were in a high school English classroom and the second nine in a middle school Language Arts classroom. The two experiences were separated by far more than time and grade level.

My semester began in the high school, and I had met my mentor teacher prior to the beginning of the school year. He was an older gentleman who had been teaching English in the same school for over two decades. He was nice enough, and it seemed that we would be a good fit for the nine weeks. At first, I spent several days observing silently from the back of the room, and occasionally I would walk around to check on student work or help with a question so the students could slowly adjust to my presence in the class. After two weeks, I took over the 12th grade class and began a new unit with them. We were to read The Scarlett Letter. As my first day of teaching was about to begin, my mentor teacher came into the room pushing a cart that had a cassette player and speakers. Then he handed me a tape and told me that in over 20
years of teaching this novel the only way to make sure that students read the text was
to read along to the book on tape...in class...for the entire class period.

This was my first introduction to teaching. After four years of work at
university, where we were encouraged to experiment with new, inventive, creative, and
interactive ways of teaching, I was reduced to coming to class every morning so that I
could load a cassette in the tape player and press play. I was given no room to create
alternative methods of instruction. I was given 20 year old plans that my mentor
teacher had created and was told to follow them. There were no options. There were
no possibilities in this approach to education where I was limited by tried and true best
practices and the expectations of my mentor teacher. This was not the start I
imagined, and I could not have been more ready for those nine weeks to end, although
I wasn’t terribly excited about teaching in a middle school.

I learned very soon that my experience in the middle school was going to be
quite different. On my first day I was given teaching responsibilities, even if it was only
administering the Monday morning spelling pre-test. My mentor teacher here was
also a veteran teacher with 15 years of experience in the school, but the way she used
me was exciting. I was to begin a weeklong unit on grammar the following Monday,
and she offered me no guidelines. I was free to teach the parts of speech, subject-verb
agreement, and correct use of commas as I saw fit. Now this, I thought, was teaching.
The doors were blown wide open, and everything was possible. I was limited only by
my own imagination. I created games for the students. I taught and we learned
together. All the while the students performed at high levels, even those who had
previously been reluctant in English class.
My introduction to teaching was a sequence of contrasts. At first it was a study of what was not possible in the classroom, but then it became a work in progress of exploring numerous options that were available. It was indoctrination to what a "successful teacher does", followed by a period of trials and errors that yielded many success and many failures. It was a philosophy built upon providing instruction intended to be pleasing because it didn’t rock the boat that preceded a philosophy intended to encourage the development of teacher and student that might occasionally involve falling completely out of the boat.

I freely admit that my student teaching wasn’t a time when I was interested in making connections. If I’m honest, I saw it as little more than something that was to be endured. If a university were to select a student teacher as a model for others, I would have been last on that list. Student teaching was the final box I needed to check before I could file paperwork for a teaching license. I don’t even think I was even remotely aware of anything like a place-based pedagogy in education. I know for a fact that I hadn’t heard the term worldview before. And sustainability wasn’t anything a person had to pursue; it was more or less the way things were done on my family’s dairy farm. I didn’t know there was a particular word for re-using or saving or fixing (instead of buying new) things.

In spite of the overwhelmingly positive nature of the second half of my student teaching program, I waited two years before I sought a job as a teacher. When I did take a job, I made sure to keep to the lessons learned from the middle school. If I were to watch another student teacher have a similar experience to the one I went through, I might think that person would have about a 50/50 chance of
becoming an educator. One of those approaches (from my point of view) taught me what was not possible, not sustainable, a narrow scope, and was poor preparation for a career as a teacher. In the other, I learned what was possible, a sustainable way, a broad scope, and excellent preparation for a career. At my undergraduate institution, at the time of my education, there were no other options for student teaching outside of the immediate rural areas in Wisconsin. It was very much a take it or leave it scenario.

As a doctoral student at Penn State, I was introduced to the idea of student teaching overseas, and I would often reflect on my past experience. What would have happened to me if I were presented with the opportunity to do so? Would I immediately have gone into the profession instead of waiting? Would I still have been a classroom teacher who considered the dizzying number of possibilities? Would overseas student teaching have changed me in another way, if at all? The scope of this research aims to find out what the effects of overseas student teaching have on first year teachers. Specifically, it will address issues of sustainability, place, worldview and teacher preparation.

Nearly 20 years ago, David Orr made efforts to bring sustainability to the forethought of educational ideologies. In 1992, he suggested that, “all education is environmental education” (p. 90). The implication is that education within every discipline, including English, can be aimed toward having positive environmental outcomes. This is to say that environmental issues such as place, sustainability and worldview need not be relegated to the hard sciences, but instead can be a part of studies in the humanities. In this research, five first year teachers who completed
their semester of student teaching while abroad, and who represent the disciplines of English, Social Studies and Mathematics, will be investigated to gain an understanding of the ways in which ideas about professional preparation (Cushner and Brennan, 2007), place (Sobel, 2004), worldview (Naugle, 2002) and sustainability are informed by student teaching abroad and impact the practices in the first year of teaching.

In perhaps the most comprehensive review of international student teaching, Stachowski and Sparks (2007) published the results of an impressive undertaking. The Indiana University Overseas Project, which facilitates study abroad at the university, has been instrumental in helping student teachers complete their teacher training overseas while earning state licensure. Stachowski and Sparks gathered information from some of the 2000 former students who have participated in overseas student teaching throughout the last 30 years. While the study elicits responses on wide variety of topics from the participants, the authors do not specifically address issues of classroom practice after the student teachers return to teach in their home country, nor do they specifically focus their examination on first year teachers. This article was a catalyst for my interest in the topic of overseas student teaching.

The three domains (place, sustainability and worldview) didn’t establish themselves as true interests of mine until much later in life. I think this is why each one was so apparent on my visits to Sweden and Norway. It seemed that everywhere I looked I saw opportunities, educational and otherwise, to explore and develop a greater understanding of each one. To be sure, when I did my student
teaching I didn’t have the interest in these subjects that I do now. But what if I did? Would I have noticed these opportunities in rural Wisconsin? It’s not likely. But I imagine what could have happened if I did. Potentially, I could have taken all these things around me and incorporated them into my English classes. I could have piloted a genuinely interdisciplinary classroom during student teaching. Like I said, unfortunately, at that point in life I was not a student with those particular interests.

At present, these two realms remain separate entities, and the above paragraphs are representative of that. Research on student teaching is specific to itself. And while there are some research connections between sustainability, place and worldview, they have yet to be connected to concepts found in the literature on student teaching. This work aims to establish that connection.

**Personal Interest**

Prior to my doctoral studies, I lived in parts of the country where sustainability, sense of place and worldview were treated very differently, but were part of the daily schema none-the-less. Not surprisingly, each place I have lived has had unique approaches to each of those topics. During that time, I picked and chose some of those approaches that were most agreeable to me, and I grew to espouse certain beliefs about each of those matters. Ultimately, they bled into my profession as an English teacher. As a former classroom teacher with designs of someday working at the college or university level, I would like to be involved with helping develop future teachers. I am interested in the ways overseas student teaching can potentially help future teachers consider issues like place, sustainability and
worldview among their subject material rather than separate entities as they often are. This research, along with understanding more about the outcomes of overseas student teaching, could help me design courses for the college or university level that would reshape secondary curriculum such that those issues become the platform from which any subject is taught.

When I was younger, traveling wasn’t something I did. In fact, neither did anyone in my family. None-the-less, I somehow developed a bit of wanderlust and went to see what existed outside of Waukesha County and the rest of Southeastern Wisconsin. Since the time I completed my undergraduate studies, I have seen all but five of the states (Maine, New Hampshire, Alaska, Oklahoma and Arkansas), been to Mexico once, and to ski in Canada. Although I had technically left the country, I never felt like it until 2004 when I went to Tanzania and Kenya to climb Mounts Kilimanjaro and Kenya, explore the Serengeti, and visit the island of Zanzibar in the Indian Ocean. During my time at Penn State, I had the opportunity to visit Sweden and Norway, two of the countries current undergraduates can choose to complete their student teaching.

I was introduced to the idea of overseas student teaching during my first year of doctoral studies. I was aware of study abroad programs, but I had never seen the combination of study abroad with student teaching. In 1983, Anderson and Self produced an unpublished document that chronicled the history of the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching (COST). At that time, the University of Alabama had been sending student teachers abroad for 10 years. In an effort to expand that opportunity to other student teachers at universities across the state and
Southeastern region of the United States, COST was born. Since that time it has expanded to universities across the country, but Alabama has always remained as the operational headquarters.

When I visited northern Europe in March of 2009 and saw firsthand the educational and professional opportunities available to students who made this choice, I immediately wanted to know more. The following year, in March of 2010, I was presented with the opportunity to visit Penn State’s student teaching site in Norway. This time, however, the purpose of my visit was not that of interested observer. My role in the second trip was to serve as a supervisor and evaluator for the student teachers. While performing those duties, I conducted research that helped me understand the decision making process of the student teachers who chose to complete the capstone of their teacher training overseas. At this point, an example might help bridge the gap between my experience and this research. While in Norway, I learned that one of the student teachers bought a used pair of cross-country skis to commute to and from school, meeting up with other teachers from her school along the route. Skiing as a means of transportation seemed appropriate to the place, a sustainable means of transportation, and opened up opportunities to discuss worldview in terms of being culturally aware and tolerant. Thus, this new research allows me to follow up with those same students to explore the level of satisfaction with that choice now that they are all in their first year of teaching.

The five participants in my study, however, at least had some inkling of those topics before student teaching. I was fortunate to be a course instructor for some of them, and I had the chance to at least meet and talk to each one of them before
heading to Norway. In this new teaching environment, where I saw so many possibilities to connect place with sustainability and worldview, would these five participants notice these opportunities during their student teaching? Would that manifest itself in their student teaching and later, as first year teachers, would those things have an impact on how and what they taught in their classrooms? I wonder if this teaching experience abroad heightened sensitivity to these subjects and would it manifest itself in their first classroom? When I visited them in Norway, I saw people using cross-country skis to commute to and from work. This single action combines all three ideas. Skis are useful in a place where it is cold and snows. Skiing is a sustainable means of transportation. The act of skiing to work demonstrates a specific part of the worldview that people in this part of the world have. Travelling to and from their schools on public transportation every day, I know that these five participants saw this very same thing. It is where I first saw it. So would they start with one example like that and connect it to their teaching?

I believe there is an opportunity that exists overseas and that it is not present in a domestic student teaching experience. Certainly, when anyone is operating within their zone of comfort, they continue to take for granted that which surrounds them on a daily basis. It is easy to overlook things that we see and hear every day. But, because these student teachers were in Norway, where everything was new and different, would they begin to take notice of the small details of life surrounding them? During my visit to Norway, one school had a weekend outing. Administration, faculty, staff, parents and students were all welcome to attend a ski trip. The school had reserved a hut that was about 10 kilometers down a trail and
invited everyone from the school community to join in a luncheon in the woods. This school-sponsored event is another example of how place, sustainability and worldview are combined in one act. Again, because these student teachers were surrounded by events and actions that combined place, sustainability and worldview, would it infiltrate their teaching? Would these lessons be connected to the lessons of their content as first year teachers? Ultimately, would it make them better, more well rounded teachers who are capable of providing their students the opportunity to learn more than just content?

I never took advantage of a study abroad program in my own undergraduate studies. In hindsight, this is a regret of mine. Furthermore, I never had the opportunity to do my student teaching in a setting other than the immediate and surrounding areas in rural Wisconsin. In fact, had I been given that opportunity, I’m not sure I would have taken it. Student teaching is the crown jewel of any teacher preparation program. It is the culmination of years of study and practice and is the final opportunity prior to employment to hone one’s skill set as an educator. I couldn’t have imagined any reason for this crucial component of teacher training to take place in an environment and under conditions that seem so very different from the one I was hoping to be employed in. It would have seemed like going to rugby practice with my hockey skates on. During the time I have been working toward completion of my degree, I started to wonder if there was legitimacy in these types of programs that combined study abroad with professional training. Was it simply undergraduate tourism for credit? I wanted to know more.
Research Questions

After I became aware of some of the literature about overseas student teaching, I wanted to learn about five undergraduates who chose to do their student teaching in Norway. I wanted to find out why they chose this option, especially when I considered that the keystone of their teacher training will be conducted in an environment and school system that is different from the one they will likely be employed in the following year. In the spring of 2010, I conducted research designed to understand the decision to student teach overseas. Knowing that all of their students would be non-native English speakers, that there would be significant cultural differences, and that the approaches to education are different, I wanted to know why those five pre-service student teachers made this choice. Did those undergraduates have similar personality characteristics that lend themselves to this kind of student teaching experience? Did they have expectations that matched the outcomes described in literature about overseas student teaching? What did this type of experience mean to them as opposed to a traditional student teaching experience? What were the benefits it offered that made it more attractive than the traditional student teaching? In other words, the immediate and overarching question was why did they make this choice?

This research intends to build upon my previous work. Now that those student teachers are all employed as first year teachers, the primary question is how does an overseas student teaching experience effect first year teachers’ conceptualization of place, sustainability and worldview and how does this infiltrate their teaching practices? The goals for this study are twofold. The first is to
promote the benefits of an overseas student teaching experience. The second is to suggest that this type of experience is beneficial for future teachers who want to consider issues of place, sustainability and worldview as continuing themes in their classrooms. To accomplish these goals, I will need to illustrate the depth and breadth of the experience. Case study methods (Dyson and Genishi, 2005) among a small group of first year teachers might best facilitate this. This approach is thus different from previous research that makes use of larger groups. Where previous research appears to emphasize breadth, this will focus on depth. In one sense, it is my hope to show that this type of overseas experience is related to desire and ability of first year teachers to include those issues in their regularly planned curriculum. Interviews (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002) and online focus groups (Reynolds, et al, 2007) are two ways to explore the thoughts of first year teachers spread across different states.

The sites for this research are varied. As the researcher, I will not be in the same location as the first year teachers. They have sought and earned teaching jobs in a variety of locations. Thus, all participants will be situated within the environments of their own particular schools and communities. They will be describing their experiences as first year teachers as they relate to student teaching abroad from their own points of view. As such, I believe that online communications hold potential for being the optimal means with which to conduct this research (although once research was underway that assumption quickly proved to be flawed). The participants have been targeted as a result of their involvement with overseas student teaching during their final year of
undergraduate study. They are all teachers I have previous experience with either as former students or as former student teachers I have supervised and evaluated while overseas.

**Chapter Summary**

It is my intent to begin each chapter with a personal story. My hope is that this will set the stage for the reader in terms of what is to come in the remainder of the chapter. Chapter Two will be a discussion of research methods and modes of analysis. Because this research explores the experience of first year teachers in four distinct arenas (place, sustainability, worldview and teacher preparation), it seemed awkward to include a traditional literature review in the second chapter. Instead, what I have done is included a thorough review of relevant research at the beginning of each chapter pertaining to the specific subject. With that in mind, Chapter Three will examine the site and location for each of the five participants as a precursor to a discussion on the idea of place in their teaching. Because each of the five participants are in different and unique places, it will be important to establish locale. The subjects are currently teaching across the country from Massachusetts to California, and one is teaching internationally in Thailand.

Chapter Four will take a close look at the concept of sustainability within each of those communities, schools, and particularly the classrooms of the first year teachers. Sustainability is a broad subject, and in this section of the dissertation, the definition of “sustainable” will vary widely with place. As an example, sustainable practices in the California desert will be very different from those in the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area. Chapter Five will put the concept of worldview
under the microscope. Under the umbrella of that topic falls tolerance and understanding of differences. Because two of the five first year teachers are in large metropolitan areas (Boston and Philadelphia), tolerance and understanding of differences between students and teacher could be a crucial factor in classroom environment.

Chapter Six contains results relating the first year teachers’ ideas about, and overall impressions of, how an overseas student teaching experience has figured into their profession as educators. Having never had a domestic student teaching experience, these first year teachers will not have the benefit of direct comparison. However, as part of their teacher education program at Penn State University, all students are required to spend eight weeks in a neighboring school district the semester prior to student teaching. Because all five subjects share this common experience, this will be the basis by which they will make their comparisons between domestic and international teaching experiences.

Finally, Chapter Seven will be a concluding discussion of implications and insights gained from this research. As noted earlier, it is my hope that this work will ultimately serve the function of promoting international student teaching. It is my belief that by student teaching in foreign environments, where ideas about sustainability, place and worldview are more at the front of traditional paradigms, that first year teachers will be better prepared to address those topics in their classrooms.
Chapter 2

Research Methods

Participants

As noted earlier, my time at Penn State included teaching undergraduate methods courses as well as field supervision. All five of these participants were, at one point or another, either former students or student teachers that I observed and evaluated in the field. I was the instructor in an English methods course called Young Adult Literature for those who were former students of mine. I was the field supervisor for all of them during their semester of student teaching overseas. Their participation in this research, in no way, had any effect on their grades in those classes or the quality of evaluation they received while student teaching. Furthermore, their participation will not, in any way, place them in any manner of professional risk in their current teaching positions.

The inclusion of these individuals in the study is what Maxwell (2005) refers to as “Purposeful Selection”. He says of purposeful selection that, “This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, p. 88). This to say that this study would be of a completely different ilk were there participants who completed their student teaching domestically. Further, this study would also have a different flavor if the participants had all student taught in
Norway but done so at different times. In this instance of purposeful selection, not only did all participants student teach in Norway, but also they were also overseas during the same semester. In this way, I hope to gather information that might not be available with a different selection of subjects.

Although my background in public school teaching is secondary English, the participants represent three separate disciplines. While three are currently first year English teachers, those positions take different shapes. Adam teaches English as a foreign language to Thai nationals in Pak Chong, a city one and a half hours northeast of Thailand’s capital, Bangkok, by train. I was his supervisor and evaluator during his term student teaching in Norway. Jimmy is teaching English/Language Arts to 7th graders in Melrose, Massachusetts, a suburb 30 minutes by car west of Boston. Dave is a substitute English teacher in the School District of the City of Erie, Pennsylvania. I served as an undergraduate instructor for both Jimmy and Dave’s English methods classes, and I was also their student teaching supervisor and evaluator.

Furthering the diversity of the participants are two participants who do not teach English. Prior to observing and evaluating Pat during his student teaching in Norway, I had no experience with him. Pat was a secondary social studies education major as an undergraduate, and during the course of this research he was teaching modern world history to 10th and 11th graders in well-to-do Bucks County, due north of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The fifth, and final, participant is also a first year teacher with whom I had no experience prior to being her observer and evaluator during student teaching in Norway. Her course of study as an
undergraduate led her to a degree in secondary mathematics education, and throughout the duration of this research, she was employed as an instructor at High Trails Outdoor Science School near Big Bear City, California.

**Research Context**

This study, in many ways, is a continuation of research conducted during the spring of 2010. In that research, all five of the participants were in the midst of their student teaching during that academic term. As their student teaching supervisor, I traveled to Norway for their evaluations and also conducted interviews with each of them to try to understand the decision to student teach overseas. Trondheim, Norway is the former national capital and the city, to include it’s surrounding areas, is home to nearly 250,000 people. It is an interesting combination of rich tradition and history that finds itself at the center of a very modern and bustling community. The cathedral at the heart of the town dates back to the 11th century and is kitty-corner from a popular mall. The university branch in town sits atop a hill overlooking the river and resembles a castle, but the view from above reveals a lively ocean-based industry a short distance away. If Norway takes the shape of a spoon, Trondheim is roughly in the 10 o’clock position on the spoon. In other words, it is located in the northwest part of the country. It lies on Trondheims Fjord, which provides access to the Atlantic Ocean, and the city is divided by a river that is home to what appears to be a vibrant maritime community.

In spite of being only a few degrees of latitude south of the Arctic Circle, the ocean air prevents the temperature from dipping into unbearable reaches. A 45-minute train ride to the north will take riders through Hell (the name of a
Norwegian town) and deliver them at Vaerness, the international airport. To the east lies the mountain range that forms a great majority of the border between Norway and Sweden. These mountains are home to some of the worlds best ski areas and hosted the Lillehammer Winter Olympics in 1994. My visit was in the spring, and being that far north has a great impact on hours of sunlight in a day. In March, during my visit, the sun was never completely up until about 8:30 and was down by 4:00. This was something the student teachers had to deal with immediately upon their arrival in January when available daylight hours were even fewer.

Public school in Norway shares some similarities with school in the United States, but, of course, there are also differences. My understanding of the education system came from personal conversations with faculty members and administrators in the three schools I visited. Compulsory schooling begins at age six, continues for 10 years, and there are four divisions. There are lower (1-4) and upper (5-7) primary grades that are followed by secondary school. In lower secondary, grades 8-10, students generally attend their neighborhood school. At the end of grade 10, students and parents can decide to end the free, formal education with 10 years of required public education completed. Upper secondary, grades 11-13, sees students from around the city as each school offers certain areas of specialization for students. Because of this specialization, students must apply for admission to their upper secondary school if they choose to attend.

In Norway there is a national curriculum. In spite of this nationalized curriculum, schools are encouraged to make changes based on local interests and
needs. In addition to content in what we might call core subjects, the national curriculum also places emphasis on culture and values. In this way, schools farther north (which is to say schools that might have a higher percentage of indigenous people) are given the flexibility to study Sami traditions and values and how they might be similar or different from the traditions and values of people further south in cities like Bergen, Stavanger or Oslo. So although all students are required to study Sami culture, there exists an opportunity to explore it further where it is more relevant.

There is a common set of school subjects at the primary and lower secondary levels. Many of the subjects are what one would expect, but religious or ethical education is also included and English is mandatory from the primary level on. In addition, physical education is mandatory throughout the 10 years of public schooling. Upper secondary is sort of a half-way house to university. It exceeds the demands and rigor of lower secondary, but is below the level of university. Every student has the right to three years of upper secondary school, but slots in each school are awarded based on merit. In other words, a student might not be able to study his preferred subject in upper secondary if the school fills early and might have to settle for his or her second choice. While the core curriculum continues in upper secondary, students can apply for programs in business studies, sport and physical education, music, culinary arts, cosmetology, building trades, plumbing, forestry, health care, or any of the other available programs. Each upper secondary school offers certain programs, and students must apply for admission. As noted
earlier, all students are guaranteed three years of further schooling, but it may not be in the field of their first choice.

Students do not receive grades until lower secondary school, and the marks given range from 1 (the lowest) to 6 (the highest). Marks are determined based on performance on exams, class participation, and improvement. Written exams can last longer than one period, but students are encouraged to use means beyond composition skills in illustrating their point. In other words, students may create charts, drawings or graphs to develop their position in the examination. There are national standardized tests, but the delivery and assessment are quite different. For example, Dave’s mentor teacher (Steinar) conducted an oral assessment in his English class. His means of assessing was conversational in nature, but he made sure to include all students in the discussion. After the discussion was complete, he wrote an assessment of the entire class and evaluated their performance. They all received the same score. To restate, there are certainly some things that resemble similarities to public schooling in the United States, but other aspects were entirely different. As student teachers, the five participants had much to learn and adapt to both in and out of the classroom.

The participants arrived in Trondheim early in 2010. They were all responsible for getting themselves to Norway, and because of this there was no welcome, no warm reception, and nobody was waiting for them at the airport. To some, this was an exciting part of the adventure. To others, it caused their experience to begin with a degree of frustration. From the beginning, the students
were on their own, and they were forced to figure out how to get to Trondheim and on to NTNU (the cooperating Norwegian university) from there.

With varying degrees of success, they all managed to find their way to the university and were assigned to their student housing. This area of campus appeared like a village of 40 or 50 A-frame style houses. Each house had a small glass porch, not unlike a mudroom, which was the main entry to the dwelling. From the mudroom, a door opened into the main structure. Once inside, visitors were in the one common room in the house, the kitchen. There was an electric stove, a refrigerator, a sink, cabinets that were stocked with cooking necessities, silverware and dishes, and there was enough room for a small kitchen table as well. The remainder of the house was divided into four quadrants, one for each resident, and two full bathrooms.

The A-frames housed Norwegian undergraduates, international students studying abroad, and the five participants in this study. None of the five lived in the same house. The A-frame village truly had an international flavor. I met Jamaicans, Germans, Italians, Dutch, and of course, other Americans. Several nights I was invited to a home cooked meal prepared by one of the international students living with one of the participants. This was a real treat for obvious reasons, but it was also a very economical treat. Trondheim, and Norway in general, is expensive by American standards.

My first night in town, I met the student teachers at a small pub across the street from my hotel. I ate typical bar food; I had a burger, fries and one beer. My bill was NK240 or about 35 US Dollars. Coming from central Pennsylvania where a
pitcher of beer can be had for $4, the student teachers were appalled at the $8 price tag on a pint of beer. Fortunately, the A-frame village was within walking distance from BunnPris and REMA1000 (both grocery stores), both of which sold beer as well as groceries. I realize that I have mentioned beer four times. This is not to say that student teachers go overseas to drink but rather to point out the cultural difference in the way people view alcohol. It was common for a student teacher to join his or her mentor for a beer during the week. This was done to have academic discussions away from the school setting, but also to emphasize balance. Every mentor teacher I met believed that it was important to have a life beyond the classroom.

Along with student teaching, the participants also attended weekly seminars that were facilitated by NTNU faculty. These seminars were attended by other international student teachers as well, and the facilitator engaged the group in discussions (all in English) that allowed the student teachers to share successes, express frustrations, support one another, and build a professional community of practice and learning.

Each of the participants had a different schedule during the week. In Norwegian public schools, classes are not conducted every day and, as such, the participants didn’t necessarily teach every day. Academic schedules for Norwegian students resemble a schedule that an American university student might have, particularly in upper secondary. In some ways, because of this schedule, it is the ideal environment for student teaching. Rather than teaching seven periods a day every day, these student teachers might have taught up to three classes a day and
were thus able to use the remainder of their time for reflection, preparation and planning for the next day.

Of the five student teachers in Trondheim, two were placed at Sverresborg Ungdomskole. Adam was teaching English and Physical Education to 10th graders with his mentor Frode, a veteran teacher of 10 years. Pat was also at Sverresborg but was teaching History (his area of expertise) and English to 9th graders with his mentor Kamila, a relatively new teacher with three years experience, this being her first year as a full time teacher. Sverresborg was a relatively new school with contemporary styling both inside and out. Pat and Adam relied on public transportation to and from school each day. Their ride consisted of a 20-minute trip north from the student housing area at NTNU to Trondheim’s city center. From there, they transferred busses and travelled another 10-15 minutes by bus to the west where they were left with a 5 minute walk through a residential neighborhood to reach their school. In all, the trip took about 40 minutes one way.

Two other student teachers were at Charlottenlund Ungdomskole. Jimmy and Adriana had a similar trip to school from the student housing area at the university. The difference was that once they got to the city center, they took a different bus to the north and east. Again, they disembarked in a residential area and had a 5-10 minute walk to their school. Charlottenlund did not appear to have the flash and style from the outside, but the interior of the school was newly renovated, and all students (even some teachers) took their shoes off upon entering the school. Most people inside the school spent their day in stocking feet. Jimmy was teaching only English in a 9th grade classroom with his mentor, Gunwar, who
had been in education for over 20 years. Adriana was teaching Mathematics (her primary content area) and English to 10th graders with her mentor Stefan, also a veteran teacher of 10 years.

The fifth student teacher, Dave, had perhaps the most confusing school to reach. As I alluded to earlier, the student housing was south of the city, and so was Dave’s school. Unfortunately, it was in a location where “you can’t get there from here”. To be more precise, Dave had to take the same trip north to the city center, and then transfer busses only to travel back south and slightly west again. Once he got off the bus, however, his school was almost directly across the street. Dave was the only student teacher placed in an upper secondary school, Heimdal V.G.S., and primarily taught English but would occasionally teach lessons in the Politics and Government class. This upper secondary school specialized in providing students opportunities to pursue excellence in sport, music, and art. In fact, several alumni of Heimdal have gone on to represent Norway at the Olympics. Dave’s mentor was Steinar, an experienced teacher with over 20 years of experience.

In all cases, the schools and faculty were very welcoming, accommodating, and supportive of both the student teachers and me. Many faculty members were curious about the American education system and were not afraid to ask questions. The schools all had what might be called open campus in the United States. If a student was not scheduled for a class during a particular period of time, you might find them playing ping-pong or pool in one of the common areas specifically for students. Often times, students were content to share a cup of coffee and conversation with friends or visitors from across the Atlantic. Surprisingly, those...
students who were not on structured time did not distract those in classrooms. They were aware of their surroundings and respectful of others around them.

The same can be said for students in the classroom. Beginning in their second year of public school (or at age eight), all Norwegian students are required to study English. Because of this, all of the student teachers were able to teach their classes in English. The Norwegian students were shy using English, but spoke very well and were quite polite in class. At times, when a student was not able to express himself in English, he or she would speak to the mentor teacher in Norwegian and ask how to say something. It was not necessary for the student teachers to learn Norwegian, although many of them picked up a fair bit of the language during their time in country. Classes are very informal. Stefan, in fact, was a huge fan of music, and during the days I visited Jimmy and Adriana he was wearing blue jeans and a Led Zeppelin t-shirt one day and a Beatles t-shirt the next. A wardrobe did not define professionalism.

Although I was there as a representative of the university performing the duties of supervisor and evaluator, my role with three of the student teachers was different in that I had taught two of them, Dave and Jimmy, in previous coursework. It was not difficult, however, to separate past classroom experience from present teaching evaluations. Adriana I also knew prior to my visit to Trondheim, but my relationship to her was little more than an introduction as a friend of Dave's in the fall semester preceding student teaching. Pat, Adam and I had no prior experience together, but I was made aware of their work from other doctoral students who had
taught them previously. Their selection for this research was determined by virtue of their participation in the program.

In other words, the purpose of that research was to understand the reasoning behind choosing student teaching in an environment that is so very different from one they will likely be teaching in upon their return to the United States. This dissertation research hopes to pick up where that left off, and is an attempt to understand how that particular practicum experience translates to the classroom as a first year teacher in this country.

This study involved interviewing each participant a total of seven times. Four of the interviews were identical and all participants answered the same questions. Those interviews were based upon four specific themes: place, sustainability, worldview, and teacher preparation. In the follow-up to each of those interviews, students were asked different questions that were tailored to the responses given in the first round. Each participant was interviewed only once on the subject of teacher preparation. To restate, each participant was interviewed twice on each topic, with the exception of the final subject of teacher preparation. In the first interview, the questions were identical. In the second interview on each topic, the questions were individualized.

Because of the diverse locations of the five participants, it was not possible for me to observe them teaching. The great physical distance between me and the participants led to the selection of Internet based communication and telephone interviews as the primary means of data collection. As such, this research is not intended to determine the effectiveness of their teaching as a result of student
teaching overseas. Rather, it is more for the purposes of exploring the depth of their ideas regarding the efficacy of such a student teaching option as it pertains to the four specific topics.

**Research Design**

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the researcher in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 3)

This is a qualitative study that was designed to investigate the experiences of first year teachers, who completed their student teaching practicum overseas, in four specific areas. Specifically, I collected data that will show the experiences of first year teachers as they address issues of place, sustainability, and worldview in their classrooms. In addition, I collected data that addresses the issue of student teaching overseas as it pertains to teacher preparation. Because of the intent of this research, qualitative methods were selected and will aim to attain the goals outlined above by Denzin and Lincoln. Glesne (2006) corroborated the use of qualitative methods for this type of exploration and stated, “‘Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved...the researcher seeks to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them’” (Glesne, p. 4). Glesne’s comment, in conjunction with my intentions, points to qualitative methods
as essential in discovering the ways in which an overseas student teaching
practicum influences the experiences had in their very first classrooms. A more
thorough description of the exact methods will follow.

The only potential for quantitative analysis to be conducted as a result of this
research (as I envision it) is a comparison among those that participated. In other
words, the only quantitative data presented could be to suggest that three
participants stated X, whereas only two stated Y. This data was collected through a
series of interviews that were conducted on the telephone, recorded, and then
transcribed. Interview questions, both those that were asked of all participants and
those that were specific to each teacher, are included in the appendices. The
transcripts from these interviews were the primary data source for this research.

Document analysis, or coding, was then put to use to identify emergent themes
within the responses. Those themes identified were then further broken down into
relevant subcategories that were used to specifically point to their reflections on the
overseas student teaching experience as it relates to first year classroom practice.

Other data that was used in this research includes email conversations. At certain
times, and with certain participants, phone conversations were not possible. As
such, those who were unable to be interviewed via telephone were instructed to
type their responses to the interview questions in an email or attached document.

Finally, other relevant email correspondence that was not specifically included in
this research design was also included as data when the contents shed further light
on the lived experience of the first year teachers.
This research is largely phenomenological, and draws heavily on the work within Max Van Manen’s (1990) book, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. It is relevant, at this point, to discuss a few of the major pretenses of such an approach. According to Van Manen, “The fundamental model of this approach is textual reflection on the lived experiences and practical actions of everyday life with the intent to increase one’s thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness or tact” (p. 4). I openly admit that sustainability, sense of place, a broad worldview, and effective teacher preparation are of great significance to me. Thus, as the researcher, it is with great hope that I approach this work. I hope that this work will shed light on one’s own actions in those four domains. It is my wish, that the subjects in this study, and the readers of this work (including myself), examine our own lives and make changes in those four arenas that suit our current situations and the larger national, international, and global situation.

Because of the intense presence of self-examination, a phenomenological approach seemed to make the most sense. “From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings” (p. 5). Asking the subjects a series of questions that will illuminate their experiences in Norway as well as their experiences as first-year teachers, I will have little choice but to examine their slices of the world. While there may not be a great deal of generalizability found in the data presented here, this will be an accurate portrayal of the world we live in and will undoubtedly add to the mosaic of qualitative research that helps us to
understand our shared world as, “Lived human experience is always more complex that the result of any singular description” (p. 16).

Phenomenological research blends well with Geertz’ (1973) notion of “thick description”. He says that, “There are three characteristics of description: it is interpretive; what it is interpretive of is the flow of social discourse; and the interpreting involved consists in trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse” (Geertz, p. 10). From Van Manen’s standpoint, “A good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience. It is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience” (p. 27). It is my intention to follow in the traditions of both Geertz and Van Manen and provide a thoroughly rich description of the experiences of these participants. I will know that I have succeeded when I produce a document that provides an accurate interpretation of the first-year teacher’s discourse on their experiences that reifies the way we live in the world.

**Materials and Instruments**

The four topics selected for this research did not arrive accidentally. They became particularly interesting to me both during the course of my studies as a doctoral student and as a result of my participation in two overseas trips to Sweden and Norway. In both countries I explored the public educational system, and I was struck by the presence of these specific elements. When considering place, for example, the Norwegian faculty and students I saw seemed to have a clear understanding and close relationship with the region in which they lived. In one case, teachers used cross-country skis to get to school, and in another a student
spoke to me about his diet consisting of a high volume of fish given their proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. When considering sustainability, I think about how I saw Toyota Prius taxi cabs for the first time in Sweden’s capital city of Stockholm. Also, along the Baltic waterfront in the same city, there were interactive displays that allowed passersby to examine the current air and water quality. I wondered what it would be like to go to school in a city where this noticeably sustainable type of consciousness existed. Regarding worldview, I also think about Swedish students who discussed recent immigration issues with me and were able to trace each influx of immigrants into Sweden to United States military conflicts dating back to 1991.

Because of these experiences I became more interested in these topics and studied them further. As such, I used a variety of articles and texts on each of these subjects to guide the questions I created for the participants in this research. The questions given to the participants reflect the recurring principles in each body of literature. In other words, I did not ask these questions merely because I thought they were interesting, but because they could be related back to scholars who have published (sometimes extensively) in each specific field.

**Data Collection Procedure and Analysis**

Initially, it was my intention to conduct this research and collect data using only electronic means of communication. Email was my first option. The second was an online discussion forum hosted by Penn State University called PICCLE (Pedagogy for InterCultural Critical Literacy Education). It was my hope that this online forum would allow for a multi-layered discussion on each topic and that it
would offer the benefits of a focus group. For approximately six weeks I tried to make this work. In the end, it was not the optimal means for communication with the first year teachers, and as a former teacher I can understand why it didn’t work for them. To a man, each of them stated that it was simply too easy to ignore an email in the in-box that wasn’t from a parent, administrator, colleague or otherwise directly related to one of their students or the happenings within the school. With so much happening in the lives of first year teachers struggling to stay afloat with planning, grading, meetings, and attendance at school functions for supervisory purposes, an email was just too easy to put off. Again, Creswell (2003) speaks to the development of methods as part and parcel for qualitative research. “Qualitative research is emergent…the data collection process might change as doors open and close for collection” (p. 182). I, in fact, found this to be the case even before the data collection process began. It is, however, interesting that the decision to switch from electronic communication to telephone interviews was made via the electronic communication that the group eschewed.

Thus, among the group, we agreed that scheduling a firm time and date for a phone interview was the best way to accomplish our task. The one exception to this change occurred with Adam, the first year teacher in Thailand. In Adam’s case we decided to use Skype, essentially a televised phone call conducted through the Internet, as our means of communication given the potential difficulties of time differences and expenses of international phone calls. Once the initial calls were placed, and the initial interviews conducted, the participants and I all agreed to schedule our interviews three weeks apart. In this way, I had time to transcribe the
interviews, create personalized follow-ups, and give the questions to the teachers ahead of the scheduled interview. Additionally, it allowed the participants a period of time to reflect on the subject matter of the interview prior to the follow up. We did our best to avoid scheduling calls during holiday weekends, and for the most part things went smoothly once this change in primary method of data collection occurred.

This is a step-by-step list of the procedures and processes I went through during data collection in order to interpret the data collected (Glesne, 2006, p. 6). Using the relevant literature found within each of the four components of the study, I generated a list of questions to be answered by each of the participants. I intended to use responses to these questions to generate a tailored follow up interview on the same subject, and this was my structure for series of interviews. Speaking of the structured nature found within a qualitative research project Maxwell said, “Structured approaches can help to ensure the comparability of data across individuals, times, settings and are thus particularly useful in answering questions that deal with differences between things” (Maxwell, p. 80). It is my contention that this approach will thus allow for comparisons between the experiences of the first-year teachers. Related to this line of thinking regarding the structure of the interviews and the generation of questions is a comment from Spradley who noted that, “Both questions and answers must be discovered from informants” (Spradley, quoted in Emerson, 1995, p. 112). In some ways, the participants generated their own questions for the follow up interviews. Seen in this light, the research subjects not only discovered, and provided me with, answers to questions, but they were also
discovering questions that I would use for the next time we spoke. This was, however, only possible because of the nature of the questions asked. This is to say that I followed the suggestion of Emerson (1995) to, “ask questions that are intentionally open-ended” (Emerson, p. 114). None of the questions were yes/no or either/or types of questions, as much as they were asking for descriptions of things and events.

In the aftermath of the actual interview, the contents of the recordings were then transcribed to text for analysis. Analysis included categorization of themes within the four topics, breaking down those themes, rearranging those themes to draw comparisons between data in the same category (Maxwell, 2005). Or, as stated by Emerson (1995), I was charged with the task to, “look out for and record different stories told about the same events” (Emerson, p. 117). The events became the categories within the themes, and the variations between the stories became the basis for comparison and, ultimately, conclusions. The notion of story is validated as a means of investigating social phenomenon by Carter. Carter (1993) suggested that, “The special attractiveness of story in contemporary research on teaching and teacher education is grounded in the notion that story represents a way of knowing and thinking that is particularly suited to explicating the issues with which we deal” (p. 6). All told, the combination of open-ended questions, stories, and investigation of social phenomenon being me to a phenomenological qualitative research project for this dissertation.

I used what could be described as a process of open coding during the analysis of the transcriptions. In open coding the researcher examines data “line by
line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest” (Emerson, 1995, p. 143). Although I structured the interviews around ideas commonly found within the literature, the subjects provided me with a wide variety of new topics and themes that I could not have predicted. In this way, the study also follows a grounded theory approach. “Grounded theorists give priority to developing rather than to verifying analytic propositions. They maintain that if the researcher minimizes commitment to received and preconceived theory, he is more likely to discover original theories in his data” (Emerson, 1995, p. 143). I can’t be certain that this research will provide me with enough material to create and discover an original and completely new theory, but there will be results that do not fit the mold of prior work within the field. In other words, it could be said that this particular, “Grounded theory is designed to develop a well integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough explanation of social phenomena under study. A grounded theory should explain as well as describe” (Corbin and Strauss, 1999, p. 5).

**Researcher Perspective**

I will describe myself as the researcher and describe my experiences that are relevant to my interests in this research. Creswell (2003) suggested this as an integral part of qualitative research and stated, “The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study” (p. 182). From this perspective, the researcher can be construed as an additional instrument in the research process. In qualitative research, the researcher as instrument is usually accepted, and some section of the methods describes the perspectives of the
researcher as a type of validity check on the collection of qualitative data. In this section I will attempt to be as transparent as possible with my pre-existing set of values and examine how that could potentially influence my interpretation of the results. Furthermore, my previous experiences as a teacher and student of these specific areas have no doubt created certain biases in me that might also color my interpretation of the data. Whenever possible, I have acknowledged where those instances of objective interpretation may have been compromised, and offer alternative explanations for the data given.

On the surface, sustainability, place, worldview and teacher preparation might seem unrelated, and I suppose they could be. However, it is my own unique life experience that has brought me to the confluence of these three topics. I think the most obvious experience is that which comes from being a high school classroom English teacher for eight years. One of the things that I realized during those years was that I initially felt ill prepared for teaching. Discovering overseas student teaching showed me an alternative to the traditional student teaching route. The sustainability and place components comes from a variety of experiences that range from my time on a dairy farm as a kid, to hiking and camping for the 10 years I lived in Colorado before moving to Pennsylvania for my doctoral program. These experiences instilled in me an appreciation for nature, the natural order of things and the principles of preservation and conservation that have an effect on the decisions I make in my life today. My interest in worldview also stems from that background. As a child, the people in my community and family knew little about that which did not immediately have an effect on them. This is not to say that they
were uneducated, rather than they had little interest in events, beliefs and alternate perspectives held by others in more distant places.

The primary assumption that I bring to this research, and biggest potential stumbling block, is that my audience (teachers and students) will have some sort of innate desire to act in a way that reflects responsible environmental decision-making. I can’t imagine growing up other than how I did, and I can’t imagine a better way to spend ten years of my life after college than the way I did it. I wouldn’t have been able to have those experiences had the land upon which they occurred been in some way spoiled or desecrated be it a result of pollution or development. And so I assume everyone wants this. I assume this line of thinking to be common. I assume the values of conservation and preservation to be common sense, and ideals that everyone would have at the fore of their mind in an effort to aspire to actions that represent those ideals. This will not be the case, and I need to be aware of that as I interpret the data presented here.

In spite of this potential for bias, I also think that there is an inherent advantage to the experiences I bring to this research. One advantage is that I have an honest concern. It is the experiences I had as a teacher, the ones I had outside, and the ones had while traveling that make me passionate about this research.

Validity

The validity of this study does not lie in the potential for generalizable results, repeatability of the research, accuracy, precision, or any other descriptors common to quantitative research. The validity of this study lies in it’s ability to
contribute to the growing bodies of research in each of the four fields so that we, as researchers can continue working toward creating a more complete picture of the whole. I took great care in triangulating the results presented. It is my hope that these efforts resulted in minimizing any oversight on the part of me, the researcher. Between the use of interviews, transcripts, member checking (to include any additional data collected as a result of this process), researcher as instrument and relevant electronic communication (that which occurred outside of the intended study), the results presented will possess a high degree of validity. These methods of validating qualitative research, in conjunction with the application of researcher as instrument, are intended to provide results that will offer an accurate portrait of the experiences of the five participants in their first year as teachers and that will also make a statement about the viability of overseas student teaching experiences.
Chapter 3

Place and Education

Introduction

Every location on this planet is unique in some way, and I took notice of a few things unique to the places I have been in Sweden and Norway. These examples ranged from general everyday practices involved in transportation and shopping, to specific programs in the school that are directly relevant to the Scandinavian lifestyle.

When I arrived in Norway, I got off the plane and had to navigate my way to Trondheim using the public transportation system. This involved riding a train to get to town and busses once I got there. On trains and busses in the United States it is common, and perhaps even law, for there to be several places at the front of the vehicle reserved for people in wheelchairs. The seats will fold up and allow for a wheelchair to slide into place. In Norway, I was struck not so much by the fact that these places didn’t exist (although in truth, I saw very few if any handicapped people in Norway or Sweden), but what they were replaced with. First, understand that I was there in March, and Norwegians were still in the throes of winter. What was in the place of the handicapped section of the bus was a ski rack. There were places for skis and poles. Riders would jump on the bus, slot their skis and poles into place, and take their seats. Many times, when a rider would leave the bus, I saw people
step off, strap their skis back on and ski on down the road to their final destination.

And this was something I noticed in the schools as well.

While in Norway, Adriana purchased a pair of used skis. I asked her if she had ever been skiing before and she said not really, but she was excited to learn. At one point during the semester, she learned that some of the teachers in her school skied as a means of transportation to get to work in the morning and home in the evening. In the morning, she would take the bus until she got to a location where she would meet up with other teachers and ski the rest of the way into school. As much as I wanted to do this with her on the day I was scheduled to observe her classes, I could not find an extra pair of skis. What I found instead was a section of the school dedicated to ski storage. It seemed that she and her colleagues were not the only ones skiing to school.

In Norway, what we might consider high schools not only offer education in core subjects, but also provide students training in a special skill. Some high schools offered training in culinary arts, cosmetology, business or marketing, carpentry, or further athletic training for those who show a high aptitude. A high school in Trondheim was responsible for producing several medal winning Olympic athletes. One school that I got to visit in Sweden had a program for plumbers. It sounded strange, especially since the plumbers were in the same high school as those studying business and marketing skills, but I wanted to see it. Tucked away in the back corner of the school (another topic for another important discussion another time) I found the plumbers, but they weren’t exactly learning to use solder and flux as I had anticipated. There were big pieces of equipment around. I asked what they
were learning and “Geo” was the reply. These plumbers were learning to install residential and commercial geothermal heating systems.

In each of these cases (the ski racks on busses, skiing to school, and geothermal heating), there is a specific element of place involved. Clearly, the climate that far north is quite cold and can produce large amounts of snow in the winter. Because of this, and because the city of Trondheim opts not to plow their streets, many people resort to skis for transportation. And as a result, the public transportation system has responded with ski racks on their busses. Furthermore, Norway and Sweden lie in unique parts of the world where relatively easy access is had to the earth’s heat. Because of this, they are minimizing their country’s dependence on oil, producing residential and commercial heating systems and hot water systems by tapping into the earth and using a renewable source. They are building a future of sustainable energy by training high school students to perform the tasks necessary to continue down this path.

These were just a few examples of things I noticed that I immediately connected to place. It makes sense that seemingly everyone skis. It makes sense that high school students are trained in geothermal technology. These skills and actions reflect upon the specific place that the residents live. I wondered what types of things the first year teachers noticed about place, how much they knew about the places they now lived and worked, and how they might go about infusing a place based pedagogy into their curriculum.
Literature Review

For those uninitiated or new to place-based education, the following review of literature has been organized into three sections so as to hopefully facilitate an understanding of the subject before moving on to what the participants had to say about the ideas presented in the material. The first category of literature will help to define the subject those unfamiliar with it. It will include the variety of ways that people have considered place over the span of several decades. The second section of literature will review applications of the idea. Several authors in this portion will show concrete and abstract ways this theory can be used. Finally, the third section will relate directly to the teacher and examine ways in which the theory has been put to use in the classroom.

Defining the Issue

As noted, I will first address authors who help to define the subject. I don’t think there can be a more enjoyable introduction to the idea of place than the writing of Wendell Berry. Berry is part poet, philosopher, farmer, environmentalist and grumpy old man. In any case he is a champion of the land and student of his place. Through his writing he encourages others, sometimes sarcastically sometimes lovingly, to do the same wherever they might be. I will draw from two of his books
as I frame this chapter. The first, *The Gift of Good Land* (1981), is Berry’s typical collection of essays in which he preaches the responsibility we all have to know our place intimately and work within the framework it provides us. Living where I do in Colorado, Berry would only be able to shake his head at the number of people living here who use water to keep their lawns green, either not knowing or not caring that the climate here is one of a high desert. More to the point, it is one that does not sustain the lush, green lawns of the Midwest and East Coast, the places many Coloradoans (including me) used to call home. This book works to promote learning about place and taking appropriate actions for the given setting. The second book of Berry’s that I used to understand the concept of place is the 1990 collection of essays called *What Are People For?* This book continues in the same vein as the previous, and Berry tackles several difficult questions. He discusses what it means to be an educated person. He examines the proliferation of technology, the appropriateness of it, and whether or not he subscribes to it. Also, he addresses another unapproved medical term he calls consumerism syndrome, known elsewhere as affluenza. Through all of these topics, he comes back to the idea of place and bases his opinions on each topic, in large part, as it connects to his place. In this research, I wondered how a school setting might work for the benefit of place-appropriate education and action.

Richard Louv (2008), author of *Last Child in the Woods*, helps readers understand the concept of place by examining what happens when we lose touch with it. In his book, he talks about something he has termed “nature deficit disorder”. It is important to note here that there is no medically recognized ailment
of the same name. In short, it's a syndrome identified by a migration indoors and away from one's place. He identified the prevalence of personal gaming systems, the overwhelming negativity in the news (to include all manner of child abuse, abduction and neglect), and the growing litigious nature of society as the driving factors behind this shift indoors. This shift is the precursor to nature deficit disorder or, in other words, a physical and cognitive detachment from one's place. His also identifies a variety of social ills that can be linked (as correlation not necessarily causality) to society's retreat from natural spaces. Among those given were obesity, diabetes, and a decline in sense of community. This text informed some of the questions I created for the participants. I wanted to know if the participants felt their students had any engagement with their place both in and out of school, what sort of community spirit existed, and how that might manifest itself within the school curriculum.

Along the lines of Louv, I think David Sobel offers an incredibly succinct discussion of the importance of place in contemporary education. In the same vein as Sobel, Mitch Tomashow discusses place and reconnecting communities to their places. Place-based educators Mitch Tomashow (2002) and David Sobel (2004) argued that the backyard is the place to take up these issues of sustainability. Tomashow (p. 81) argued that studying locally first will help to concretize larger, even global issues of sustainability. For example, considering the sources of foods eaten on a daily basis might help students of these future teachers to better understand the local delicacies when reading a novel like Things Fall Apart, a novel that takes place in Nigeria. An understanding of local foods and growing seasons
could lead to teachers and students to work toward a change in the offerings of the school cafeteria. From these two perspectives, the subject of place lends itself to other expanding circles of influence.

In an earlier work called *Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education*, David Sobel (1996) wrote for the benefit of local environments through the exploration of place. In essence, he argued that allowing and encouraging kids to get to know the places that they live ultimately results in them being better equipped to handle environmental decision making in the future. This, I think, is another way of saying that knowledge of place helps in the growth of an active and participatory citizenry.

The idea of place is one that reaches back further than the latter stages of the 20th Century. Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) is a classic work that encompasses many themes and purposes. First, it chronicles the changes in a particular place over the course of one calendar year. Next, it thoroughly describes the destructive habits of man as he attempts to conquer and control natural spaces. Finally, Leopold makes a case for a Land Ethic, in which he asks that rather than succumb to our urges to dominate nature, that we listen to the land and let it tell us how to best and most naturally use it. All three facets of this book relate to the study of place and could be used effectively by the participants. Across all three disciplines represented, across the country, and even overseas, students could document changes over a period of time, research man’s impact on the community and the changes that have occurred as a result, and also discuss the best way to use the land and resources in the immediate community.
To thoroughly understand place, the individual must situate him or herself in some sort of context. In other words, our place contains our community. Wolfgang Sachs (1992) edited a collection of essays regarding place, sustainability, the environment, and development, and in his opening essay on the environment, Sachs said that, “place constitutes community” (p. 31). Thus, it follows logically from the other selections in this chapter focusing on the significance and importance of place and how that knowledge can help to form strong bonds within a community.

Borgstrom’s (1999) Rediscovering Place and Accounting Space is a powerful piece, co-authored by one of the writers of The Ecological Footprint (1996) book. In a way, in makes sense that this work would come after the footprint for Wackernagel. I think that once a person understood their footprint – their impact on the planet – they could use that knowledge to reconnect to their place. This article takes a look at what happens to individuals who lose touch with their surroundings, they call this occurrence dis-embedding and is similar to Louv’s (2008) nature deficit disorder. The authors suggested that to fight against dis-embedding, one must re-connect with their local place.

Application of Place

Once the idea of place has been grasped, it important to move on to the next step. In this case, it stands to reason that the next area of exploration would be application of the theory. An individual might understand the concepts of place but still ask what’s next. How do I put this to any use? The following section of
literature looks at applications of the theory. Perhaps the best thing is to discover exactly where it is that you’re starting.

One example of how an individual might choose to start is to assess their current understanding of place is to use a tool called the Bioregional Quiz. Charles and Dodge (1981) put together a 20-question quiz designed to test an individual’s knowledge of the specific region in which they live (APPENDIX A). The questions range from topics like local wildlife, local plants, migratory patterns of birds, history of fires, and water. I had each of the participants answer these 20 questions in regard to where they were now. Somewhat surprisingly, the teachers who were in places that were new to them scored better than the teachers who were in places that they had a history with, and in my opinion should have known much better. If teachers are unfamiliar with their places, how can secondary students be expected to learn place appropriate knowledge and practice place appropriate actions?

One problem that can arise from today’s standardized conceptualization of education is that often times students fail to see a connection between what they’re learning in school and the world outside. And sometimes, it is because this connection doesn’t exist. Teachers are given some material that they can sometimes only teach in abstraction. How does an English teacher offer concretized examples of testable topics like tone and mood? Engestrom’s (2005) article aims to overcome knowledge that exists for school purposes only. He calls this (learning for purely school related purposes) encapsulated school learning. Teaching lessons that introduce a skill or concept and then relating those concepts to an event in the immediate community (in other words, teaching about place, or sustainability, or
worldview for that matter) works toward overcoming the encapsulation of school learning, and this is what Engestrom’s article argues for. I wondered about the ways my participants either fall into the trap of encapsulated school learning or perhaps subvert those tendencies and focus on connecting books smarts to street smarts.

bell hooks has made a career of working in the service of promoting democratic education. Through this type of education, she argues that it is possible to end class struggles and promote peace and equality. Her book *Teaching Community* (2003) is no different, and I believe I can reasonably apply her principles and ideas to place based education. In this book she discussed the struggle to change within communities and said, “The end result of this transformation is mutuality, partnership, and community...genuine community is possible” (p. 116). I believe that this type of education – one that allows for the exploration of place - promotes knowledge of place. Growing a mutually productive partnership builds community, to be sure, but it also requires a great deal of knowledge about place. What is the history of our place? Who lives here now? What do these people need? How can I work with others to provide for them? To answer these questions is to espouse some of hooks’ philosophy, but it also is to be closely tied to place.

In his controversial book *Emile* (1956), Rousseau sets forth what he considers to be the best possible way to raise and educate children by using his own as an example. I use the word controversial not to imply that there is a fervent and ongoing debate regarding the positions presented in the book, but more to say that there is considerable disagreement among readers as to whether this type of education is appropriate. That debate, however, is not why this classic book on
education is included in this chapter on place. One thing is certain in Rousseau’s piece and that is the importance of nature having a presence in the development of the child. He said, “Observe nature and follow the path she marks out” (p. 17). I would contend that this awareness and observance of nature can only be had through an understanding of place and that school is the place for this awareness, observance and understanding occur.

Most of the work teachers do is in the classroom, but it is outside of the classroom in the communities these teachers will work in that the action takes place. *Gaviotas* (1998) is a truly remarkable account of what is possible in a place. Alan Weisman recounted the occurrences in a savanna region of Columbia in South America that was thought to be all but useless. There was little water, extreme temperature swings, and a remote location to contend with. Through careful study of place, Weisman, a troupe of indigenous people, and some crafty engineers, turned this place into a lush and productive oasis that operated using the most sustainable of principles. This is the best example of what an exacting look at a specific place can potentially produce. Throughout, it is important to keep in mind that this would not have been possible without local knowledge of place.

Although this book applies more directly to the ideas of sustainability, I believe it also works to the advantage of place-based education. There is a book, written by Rees and Wackernagel (1996) and titled *Our Ecological Footprint*, that details the ways in which we create a larger than necessary carbon footprint than necessary, and then asks the reader to consider ways in which he or she could minimize it. Think about the teachers skiing to work in Norway. Yes, it minimizes
carbon footprint and ultimately works for the benefit of sustainable principles, but skiing is a mode of transportation that is specific to that place. It is for those types of reasons I included this text here.

Place in the Classroom

Now that we have worked to define the ideas of place and taken a look at some applications of those ideas, the final step is to examine specifically what this might look like in a classroom as part of a school’s curriculum. The last part of this literature review will highlight selections that put forth a step-by-step process for gaining a close encounter with place. I have done my best to include selections that extend beyond secondary English and Language Arts, the particular domain of my licensure as a public school teacher.

If an educator wanted the widest variety of ideas about how to go about exploring their places with classes of students, that teacher would need look no further than Laird Christensen and Hal Crimmel’s edited work of examples of place-based education Teaching About Place: Learning From the Land (2008). The authors represent a wide variety of regions and grade levels from around the country. The contributors span the nation from Los Angeles to Maine and public school through university. In each case, the authors relay their experiences, and sometimes experiments, in having their students learn more about their place. While some were more successful endeavors than others, they all offered students an opportunity to examine the role of human beings as well as the unique qualities and
characteristics found in each specific place. I used the lessons of these experiences in formulating some of the interview questions I had for the participants.

Sidney Dobrin and Christian Weisser have collaborated to put together two books relevant to teaching about place (and sustainability) for teachers of English in particular. On the surface this might seem to exclude the participants who are not teachers of English, but at some point during their time in Norway, all five participants taught English as a foreign language. Beyond that, the principles of the books can be applied across several disciplines. The first collaboration between these two resulted in *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches* (2001). This edited volume details the efforts of several teachers who have endeavored to incorporate place, locality and immediacy into writing and composition course assignments. The contributors are all professors of English who teach writing, and some have previous experience teaching in public schools. I think the most effective piece from this collection is the contribution of Paul Linholdt (2001). The second collaborative work between these two resulted in the 2002 book titled *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*. It seems to me that this should have been published first chronologically, as this piece lays out the theoretical approach to their method of teaching writing. This approach aims to teach writing an ecological system unto itself. In the natural world, ecology teaches us that all things are interconnected. Dobrin and Weisser (2002) extend that ecological concept to the teaching of writing so the student learns that transitions, introductions, sentence structure, and grammar (it certainly does not end there) are all interconnected within the framework of composition. The authors take this
model one step further and apply local, place-based writing assignments to this model for writing. As noted before, this approach is useful for ideas about both place and sustainability. The concept of ecocomposition teaches sustainable ideals, and the topic of the essay encourages exploration of local places. Both of these texts were used in creating questions that asked the participants to consider what they do and don’t do in the classroom as well as consider possibilities.

Leslie’s (1999) book focuses on place as well and discusses practical ways for students to get hands-on experience in nature, and she also provides some excellent concrete examples for educators. Through the use of these scenarios, students and teachers can learn about they places they come from. As a teacher of English, I took particular notice of the section of the book that talks about nature writing. Many districts and individual schools have adopted a policy that emphasizes writing across the curriculum, and this offers even more ideas on what’s possible. Gregory Smith’s (2002) article does well on the heels of the previous book, but it also works well with the desire to overcome Engestrom's encapsulation of school learning through the close examination of one’s place. Smith said, “Valuable knowledge for most children is knowledge that is directly related to their own social reality” (p. 586).

A prime example of this close examination is Umphrey’s (2007) book The Power of Community Centered Education (2007). In it is the story of a former principal who took a slight turn in his career path. After leaving public education, he came to work for the Montana Heritage Project, and his new job, “was supposed to have something to do with cultural heritage and authentic research” (p.1). What
resulted was a unique opportunity for students to study the places they came from within the state and, “students were excited by the scholarly research they were doing” (p.1).

All of this literature points to a few specific things. First, a close examination of place yields several positive results. It helps build healthy communities with an active citizenry. Furthermore, it allows for public school students to reconnect to their communities and creates that connection between lessons learned in school and application to everyday scenarios. These are things that I saw firsthand in Norway while I visited the participants during their student teaching, and I wondered if any of that carried over from their student teaching and bled into their first paid positions. Furthermore, the questions I asked them in their interviews about place reflect these three phases of the idea. How did they define or conceive of place? In what ways did they see a sense of place enacted in the community of the school or town? As teachers, how did they provide students opportunities to learn about their locality through the curriculum?

All of the ideas presented thus far about place - looking to the past, gaining a close relationship with nature, environmental education, interconnectedness and a Green Revolution - are ones that take place, in part, in the classroom.

**What the Participants Said**

Bioregional Quiz

I don’t know that I necessarily agree with Charles and Dodge’s (1981) opinion that their bioregional quiz is an accurate measure of how well one knows
their place. One of my neighbors has lived in this town (Golden, CO) for the entirety of his 60-some years. In fact, in all those years, he has moved less that one block from where he grew up as a child. I gave Cliff this quiz, and his performance was average. That said, I don’t know of anyone else with as much local knowledge as Cliff. So while I don’t believe that this quiz is a hard and fast measuring stick, I think it has some merit as a quiz that is an interesting and useful metric as a starting point.

Using it as just such a point of entry, I had each of my participants take the quiz based on the places they were currently teaching and which was not necessarily where they grew up. The scores were widespread, and that was not completely surprising. Keeping in mind that Jimmy was raised in a military family who moved frequently, his low score was appropriate. With his typical combination of sarcasm and candor, Jimmy said, “I bombed that, let me tell you. I don’t know how it was possible, but I ended up with a negative score.” Clearly, he couldn’t have ended up with a negative score, but I think this speaks to students who move from place to place as children. How are they supposed to know their place when their time is so limited? How can they get involved in the community? And I wonder about those kids as adults too. If they don’t learn participation within a community as children, how does that manifest itself in adult behavior?

One of the two who scored the highest was not a surprise to me. First, Dave scored an eight after being born and raised in the area he was thinking about as he took the quiz. He is also a person who has a natural interest in these types of questions, and so I expected him to do well. When I spoke to him, he admitted to the
difficulty of the quiz and commented on what he would imagine most people’s experience would be with the quiz. He said, "I got an eight. It was tough, even though I’ve lived here my whole life and I’ve gotten to know the place pretty well. I don’t think the average person would fare very well on it." Adriana scored the highest in spite of her only having lived in this area of California for a couple of months. But, because of the nature of her school, I was again not surprised at her score. Every week she teachers her students about many of the ideas presented on the quiz, thus her teaching job requires her to know this information. About the quiz she mentioned, "I gave myself a 10/20. I would consider some of the questions I answered half correct." I asked her how she would have done had she answered these questions based on Pennsylvania, where she’s spent her whole life prior to this experience, and she said, "What’s funny is I knew those questions better for California than I would for Pennsylvania."

Adam was another of the participants who was very new to his area. He had been in Pak Chong, Thailand for about the same length of time as Adriana had been in California. Still, I think Adam performed admirably. He said, "I didn’t do so hot. That bioregional quiz kicked my ass, but I scored a four and was pretty happy with that." I think that is the most impressive score of the bunch. Thailand wasn’t just a new place for him; it was a new country, culture and value system. That he knew enough to answer four questions correctly in that short of a time is commendable, and I think it speaks to his desire to learn about the world. He is curious by nature. Conversely, Pat is not. Although he, too, answered these questions based upon the place he was born and raised, he said, “According to the grading scale at the bottom
of the quiz, I apparently have my head up my ass. I got a two. But I never took a regional history class, and I’m just not one of those people who cares where my water comes from.”

I think what I took away from this was less about how well each of these participants knew their places and more about how much each of them cares to know their places. This does not make those who scored lower any worse as people than those who scored higher. Adam cares a great deal about his place, and he scored quite low. Adriana, who had the highest score, also cares a great deal, but if she had answered these questions about the place she had spent the most amount of time, she may have scored worse than everyone. The point, again, is that while I think this bioregional quiz is an interesting place to begin to assess one’s local awareness, it is not the final destination.

Local Water

In spite of my opinion on the value of the bioregional quiz, the participants’ knowledge of where their drinking water came from reflected their scores. Pat had no idea, and neither did Jimmy. Those two had the lowest scores. Adam, who had the next lowest score, had a relatively easy time answering as all drinking water in Thailand is bottled. To his credit, he was aware of the dam above the city. This dam helped to prevent the valley from flooding and also provided the nearby region with non-potable water (i.e. agricultural irrigation). Of the two highest scores, Dave had it easy with Lake Erie nearby, and Adriana was aware of the well that taps into the aquifer.
Trends and Changes

If the quiz measures an awareness of place, then the following responses indicate that it is a poor metric. If we exclude Jimmy and Adam from this examination, and do so because they haven’t been in their locales long enough to notice a change or trend, we are left with the three participants who had the two highest scores and the lowest score. Pat, Adriana and Dave all talk about development in the traditional sense...more roads, more stores, more people, more congestion, and less open space. Adriana admitted that she is only aware of these changes because it is part of her job to be aware and discuss changes with the students she sees each week. But it was actually Pat, the participant who scored the lowest on the bioregional quiz, who was the most outspoken opponent to the changes and development he sees happening around him. He said, “It’s a little ridiculous how everything has a nationally recognizable name. Everyone’s constantly cutting down trees and building new roads that lead to more cookie-cutter townhomes that are built right on top of the road with no property. I don’t know what the appeal is.” Again, I only mention the results from the water and trends portion of the interview to suggest that the bioregional quiz might not be the most effective metric to measure a person’s awareness and knowledge of their place.

Local Government/Involvement

Sheldon Berman (1997) argued that a large part of a person’s attachment to a place, their value of it, and their knowledge of it is dependent upon their
engagement in civic action and consideration of social responsibilities. In other words, an individual’s connection to their place has a correlation to their involvement in things like local government, civic organizations, or church groups. Because of this correlation, I asked each of my participants to comment on several things related to the issue. I asked them to think about whether there was a weak or strong local government, the level of involvement among the community, and the degree to which their students were involved in these civic and social opportunities within their respective communities.

There was a spectrum of opinions among the participants regarding local government and community involvement in civic or social organizations, some positive and some negative. First, Adam’s understanding of the Thai government provided me an inside view to another style of governing. I think it is important to note that this is his impression of the Thai government as he understood it after only a couple months in country. His summary of the overarching government was, “Thailand has a royal family, but the Parliament is becoming more powerful because the King is ailing. But it’s considered a democracy because the king has given more power to the parliament.” I asked him to talk his way down the political food chain to a more local perspective. He continued and said, “Daily political life is run through a regional government (like a state), and there are something like 15 regions in Thailand. These regional governments make all the decisions, and people vote, but it’s a very recent thing. It has only been for the last 5 to 10 years that people have been voting, and they’re not worried about voting unless they’re in a position where they’re very well educated.” Thus, it would seem that using
Berman’s ideas suggest that there is a low or poor sense of community among Thai people in his community. I asked about even smaller scale community activities and he mentioned that, “People organize small things like local festivals. There are basketball and soccer teams for the kids, but parents don’t get involved with the school.”

Pat had a similar reaction to these questions and connected what he sees in his community to the way his school is run. He said, “There seems to be a very top-down style of government, which is not surprising because that’s how it is in my school too. I don’t get the feeling that people have a lot of say in regard to what’s going on in their communities.” Pat is a social studies teacher, so I thought local issues might be a topic of interest in his classroom. He told me otherwise and said, “My students have very little understanding and really no interest in what goes on locally. Parents seem interested, even eager to be involved at the school.” Not surprisingly, his students don’t appear to be involved in other organizations beyond athletics. He said, “Most kids are involved in sports clubs, but I don’t hear about any other community organizations that kids are involved with.”

I think that Jimmy teaches in an area that is similar in affluence to where Pat teaches, and his comments were close to Pat’s. One significant difference is that Jimmy believed his area to be effective. I do not consider Pat’s description of a top-down style of government to be such. Of his community’s local government and civic organizations that can be influential in having a sense of place, Jimmy said, “Melrose seems to be a pretty active place. It seems like local governments are pretty effective. The PTA works well with the Superintendent’s Office. It’s a pretty
well off town, though, so there are a lot of people invested in both the community and the school. Everyone seems to communicate well, but in the larger sense of local government I don’t know too much. I have a lot of kids involved in sports teams, but that’s all I know about.”

Adriana, who is new to the area she teaches in, struggled to characterize her community when asked these questions. In some ways, her school isolates rather than incorporates her into the community. She was aware of a few local happenings that helped her create this opinion, “I actually don’t know, but I would think there would be a strong local government if they’ve been keeping out places like Wal-Mart and Target. I think that says something. People must be active and having their voices heard to keep things like that out of the community.” Her students, however, do not come from that area of California. As noted earlier, she sees students for one week at a time and they are bussed in from schools in the Los Angeles and San Diego areas. When I asked her to think about the activity of her students in their communities she said, “Most of my students talk about sports teams, many ride horses, and some are involved in church groups because some bring up religion in discussions.”

Some final thoughts from Dave effectively summarize what my own personal experience has been with civic engagement and social responsibility on a local level. When he spoke of his area, Dave said, “I think people here are constantly displeased with the local government, but people are involved only to the extent that they complain about things. The affluent community probably has more to say, because they might have more sway, but in general a lot of people do a lot of complaining as
opposed to taking action.” Money talks, and for the rest of us we feel like all we can do is complain. When I asked about his students, he thought he saw blind faith in his students following the lead of their parents. He said, “Students are involved with sports teams, but as far as other organizations go, I would say that students are involved to the extent that their parents are. Students go to church where their families do. There’s a lot of nuclear family influence and kids just do whatever their parents do.”

Student Perception of Self as Associated with Place

As might be expected, a student’s perception of self could be associated with their place. A student who comes from a well-to-do neighborhood might be likely to think highly of him or herself, whereas a student who comes from a less fortunate part of town might have a lesser view of self. With that in mind, I wondered if the places these students came from had any noticeable impact of their perception of self. Did the kids who came from areas that were less developed, greener or less congested think more of themselves than kids who came from neighborhoods where every fourth house looked the same and the periphery was dotted with franchise names. The participants in this study struggled to answer these questions but they did have some insight into the manner in which place might impact perception of self.

Two teachers in particular were able to point to distinct differences between certain groups of students. Because Adriana sees a new group of students each week, she encounters students from the widest socioeconomic backgrounds

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imaginable. Thinking about her students she said, “I can definitely see more arrogance from the wealthier kids, regarding the way they view themselves. The kids that come from the poorer schools are all happy to be here. They’ve worked hard to get here. They’ve had to do well in school and raise funds to get here.” If I can make a stretch here, it might seem that the kids from the poorer schools have a closer connection to place and the wealthier kids are more dissociated from it. In fact, Adriana remembered a group of students she taught not long ago who all expressed a desire to return to their bubbles of isolation. She said, “Two weeks ago I had a very stuck-up group who came from a wealthy school and all week long they just kept repeating how they couldn’t wait to go home.” I don’t know if place changed the way her students felt about themselves, but I do think that some of her students value place more than others and that seems to fall along economic lines.

Another teacher who saw distinct differences between wealthy and poor was Adam. Teaching in Thailand, he sees students who are pushed along two tracks. The upper track includes levels 4-6 and those are the students who will likely go on to university. There is also a lower track that included levels 1-3. Those students will go back to their farms and labor upon completion of the third level. About those two groups of students, Adam said, “Even though my city has the best school in the area, I still see a difference between the city kids and the country kids. The city kids know they’ll likely go on to university. They’re competitive and are very serious students. The others, who won’t go on to university, I see a lot more of the psychological and behavioral issues that come with the idea of being poor and not having certain things.” In spite of this serious class division in the school, he said it
doesn’t cause problems because of school uniforms. When I asked him if there were ever issues that arose between the two groups of students he said, “I don’t get status symbols. I don’t see it in clothing, cars or computers because everyone has a school uniform.” He did say that his level 1-3 students often fell asleep in class. While I can’t say whether or not the place impacted how his students felt about themselves, there does appear to be two classes of students and further investigation is required to determine if the rural students feel differently about themselves than the urban students.

Dave and Jimmy both associated place with identity, but were hesitant to equate that identity with self-esteem. Dave went to great lengths in an earlier interview to describe the differences between Erie’s city schools and the suburban/rural schools. The differences are what one might stereotypically expect, meaning that the city schools are older, with less amenities, more ethnic students, lower test scores, and the suburban schools reflect opposite trends. About the students he has seen in Erie Dave said, “Absolutely, I think your surroundings always work to develop identity. Obviously socioeconomic status dictates much of the kids’ opinions of themselves, and in Erie we have a large population of both well-off and poor.” Jimmy’s school reminds me of a suburban school of Erie. It’s newer, has plenty of bells and whistles, and the students all perform well on annual testing. But there is nothing resembling the other end of the spectrum within eyesight. Perhaps because of the separation in Jimmy’s community, his students suffer from a type of isolation. He said, “I’ll have some students who talk about a cousin or some other relative who goes to a different school and they have to listen to gunshots. So
I think there is a sense among the students that they live in a nicer area. There is a sense of identity associated with that, of being privileged, but I’m not sure I would call it a sense of entitlement.” So although these students might not get outside much and don’t have a curriculum that encourages the exploration of place, there still appears to be a sense of pride attached to being a student in Melrose.

Again, Pat’s students align with Jimmy’s. Talking about his students Pat said, “Most of these kids are pretty well off, and I don’t think they understand the struggles that a lot of people go through in life.” In spite of his very close proximity to Philadelphia, in much the same way Jimmy’s students are close to Boston, his students also seem to suffer from isolation. When the subject arises in his class, Pat provides opportunities for students to explore beyond their community if only from the comforts of the four walls of his room. Of these discussions he said, “Sometimes we talk about government services like welfare that are provided to people going through tough times. Or we’ll talk about unemployment or disability and the kids are very opposed to all these things because they feel like there’s no reason to be in a situation where you can’t support yourself. They see no possibility for failure.” Although he offered none, I think Jimmy’s characterization of his students could also be applied to Pat’s.

Values in the Curriculum

I do not mean to suggest that there is a causal relation between the results presented in the previous section and what follows, but I think it is interesting to note the following when we consider that there seems to be little interest among the
community in things like local government and various civic and social organizations (sports teams excluded). But, if the participants’ characterizations of local participation is accurate, is does not surprise me in the least that their comments on school curricula are so bleak.

Jimmy, who teaches in an affluent area outside of Boston, said earlier that there was interest and involvement in the schools and that the local government seemed to work effectively, said of his curriculum, “The curriculum I have teaches kids to be submissive and accepting. I don’t think it’s one of those, ‘This is how it is’ situations, but it also doesn’t leave itself open to opportunities for really thinking about things and explaining why they reached a certain conclusion.” It seems that in some ways the students are taught from an early age to lean more toward status quo. I asked Jimmy what happens when he puts critical thinking tasks to his students. He said, “When I do go off the books, and throw things at the kids that might be a little more difficult, they struggle. The curriculum encourages them to memorize a routine as opposed to trying to figure it out for themselves.” If this is what is taught in his school, how can there any sense of place or belonging or ownership in the community?

Adam’s description of a Thai democracy that lacks participation is not surprising given what he has seen in his school. When thinking about the curriculum in his school, and keep in mind he teaches at one of the premier schools in the region, he said, “It’s still very much a rote curriculum, and as long as that tradition continues I don’t see a full integration of democratic practices. Also, I think some of my brightest students are female, but they all know they can only go so high
because of the rules of the caste system.” Women can participate in the democratic process in that country, but there is a social stigma that places a ceiling over the advancement of women, and this is apparently learned from the beginning of their school days.

As a substitute teacher, Dave has had the opportunity to see many different curricula in many different schools. Rather than asking him to pinpoint one specific thing, I asked him to generalize and paint with broad brush strokes when describing the curriculum in and around the Erie area. He said, “There’s nothing that specifically addresses a particular worldview or multiculturalism. I think more of what it is, is people bring their kids to school with a specific conservative idealism in the background, and many things go unaddressed in the classroom so the current paradigm can be perpetuated.” That current paradigm includes, from my vantage point, segregation and inequality. Those are the messages about place that are taught, even if indirectly or unintentionally, in his area.

Is a good intention that fails worth anything? That was the idea I got from Pat when he spoke about the values in his curriculum. He at least recognized an unfulfilled potential for positive outcomes. He said, “I think they’re trying to give kids more of a global perspective and make them more globally aware. They try to give kids a perspective that reaches beyond their little area, but it fails because what we learn is very Eurocentric. My class is about imperialism and nationalism and inherently you have a course about developed nations taking advantage of undeveloped nations. I can’t say whether or not this is intentional.” Again, while he
sees the intentions of such a curriculum, he ends up of the opinion that this
curriculum could, in fact, have an opposite effect from what is desired.

Adriana’s school is very different from everyone else’s in many and obvious
ways. Because she teachers in an outdoor science school there are clearly going to
be different values that are presented and/or pushed in her curriculum.
Furthermore, she only has one week with the students to get this message across.
When I asked her about her curriculum and the values involved, she said, “Obviously
we want to teach the kids science, but the overall value we try to teach them
through the curriculum is revealed through a puzzle. If the students meet their
goals for the day, they can remove a piece of the puzzle and see a riddle written
beneath it. The riddle says, ‘We are not all passengers on spaceship Earth, everyone
is crew.’ The value we try to teach them is that we’re not just along for the ride.”
While nobody is sure whether or not these students espouse these values when they
return to their home towns, I think it is interesting that the people responsible for
teaching theses values are the same ones working to keep the nationally recognized
development out of their town.

Do They Implement Places in What They Teach...Could They?

What if things could be different? What if there was a way to combat
passivity in the curriculum and apathy in local engagement? What if teachers
encouraged students to take an active interest in their space via a place-based type
of education? This is not to say that the whole of a curriculum needs to be based
locally, but what if there were opportunities throughout the year to engage in the
community? Could things be different? Or, I might suggest, better? I asked the participants to what degree they saw place being incorporated into their own or other classrooms. Did anyone even have class outside?

I think the best way I can sum up Pat’s comments, is to say that some first year teachers are forced to put aside the idealistic tendencies they may have developed in four years of undergraduate study. And it’s various forces that cause this. Before I get into that, when I asked Pat if he ever saw classes go outside he said, “A couple of weeks ago I saw a biology teacher take her kids outside to do some soil samples, but I wouldn’t date do that just because I would be stirring things up, and there’s this whole accountability issue, and it’s stuff I don’t want to deal with.” Already I sensed some outside force that keeps him inside. I think it might have to do with the top-down style of governing in his community and his school. I asked Pat if he would ever want to take his kids outside for class and he said, “Someday, I’d love to be able to take the kids outside. I’d probably have to stretch it a little to make it relevant, but I could simulate old school marching versus trench warfare versus guerilla warfare. It would be nice to take advantage of the surroundings, but I’d probably have to come up with sore sort of bullshit to make it sound like I was going outside for a purpose.” Again, he didn’t think his school would see value in having class outside. I am not advocating having class outside for the sake of doing so, but I also don’t think teachers should feel as if they have to make up excuses for doing so. Pat concluded his thoughts on exploring place through outdoor classes and said, “You know, I’ll be honest with you, and maybe it’s because of my lack of knowledge of this place, but I absolutely do not try to do this at all.”
Jimmy expressed similar concerns with taking kids outside for class and I think it is important to note that Pat and Jimmy teach in places where the SES is relatively high across the board. When asked if he ever sees others go outside he said, “Gym class goes outside all the time, but I have not been outside on the grass.” I asked if he ever considered doing so with his students and he said, “I think I could, but I wouldn’t feel very comfortable doing it with most of my lessons because I hate how much time gets lost going up and down the stairs and getting everyone organized.” Jimmy seemed concerned with the same type of accountability issues Pat talked about. It’s almost as if neither place considers it possible for there to be genuine academic purposes for holding class outside, and neither one of these first year teachers wants to stir the pot or draw attention to themselves...understandably so. I asked Jimmy if he had ever seen anything in any part of the curriculum that relates specifically to his place. He said, “Generally, there’s nothing specific to Boston that I’ve seen in the curriculum. It seems like it’s emphasized more in elementary school. I remember learning about things specific to where I lived when I was younger, but in middle school and high school that’s not as important because we end up teaching to a test.” Throughout his interviews, he often made remarks about the young age and immaturity of his seventh graders. Jimmy also said that he would be more willing to try this if he taught an older age group of kids, “But it sucks to undercut my students based on age. The truth, however, is that it’s definitely a factor.”

Since I brought up the concept of undergraduate idealism in the previous discussion about Jimmy, let me say that I believe Dave has the highest ideals about
what education is for and what it could be in this country. But even he doubted his ability to take his class outside to explore place on a regular basis. The first thing I asked him was whether or not he saw other classes go outside. He said, “There was a biology class that went out and did some stuff in the local stream, but for the most part I would say no, students never have class outside.” When I asked if he could envision doing it himself as a regular part of his class someday, he said, “I’d like to think I could do it. I could see myself taking a class outside to make a specific point that has to do with literature, or I could make a day trip out of something like that, so I could see it happening, but probably not too consistently.” Even Dave the Idealist, Dave who preaches the virtues of educating the whole person and teaching the democratic process, even this Dave admitted that he could not see himself getting outside regularly.

Because Adam teaches in Thailand, I had no idea what to expect going into this interview. I have no previous experiences against which to measure what he is doing in Thailand. Because of this, I had to re-phrase a few of the questions for him, but I got some good information none-the-less. I was able to ask him how often he sees other students go outside for class. He said, “Sometimes, on special occasions, the students go outside for physical education, but the students here have recess for lunch and take their lunch outside every day. So the students do get outside every day, but mostly during lunch and they stay inside the boundaries of the two-acre campus.” Adam is a talkative person and I thought he might have insight into the curriculum throughout the rest of the school as a result of conversations with other teachers. I asked him if he saw anything in the curriculum specifically related to
place in any part of the curriculum including his own English curriculum. Se said, “There is nothing in the curriculum that teaches kids about place, but I’m trying to change that.” Without outside influence, Adam saw a need for incorporating place into his curriculum. As of this writing, I am unaware of the efforts he made to do so.

Teaching in an outdoor science school, Adriana clearly has the most opportunity to incorporate place. What I asked her to do when we spoke is to imagine the ways in which she might incorporate place or the outdoors into a math curriculum at a more traditional high school. Of that possible scenario she said, “We spend almost all of our day outdoors, but if I were in a more traditional classroom... I've been thinking about that for a long time. I think I could easily teach geometry lessons outside, even on a basketball court. The kids wouldn't necessarily have to have grass under their feet, although that would be preferable. I could also teach astronomy and mathematics together and take kids out at night or they could do it at home, which would give them a chance to be outside at their own home. It would also be cool to use a vegetable garden for teaching kids about money, balancing checkbooks, and budgeting through selling the food.” She does none of this at her present school and all of these ideas are her own and original. Her exploration of place at her current school involves material about the indigenous people of that area, their hunting and farming techniques, as well as geologic history of the area. None of the ideas conveyed for her own classroom overlap with what she currently does.
Final Thoughts on Place and Education

In the seventh and final interview with each participant, I asked him or her a question that was intended to tie things together for me and for them. In this instance, I asked what overseas student teaching did to their understanding of the connection between place and education. As we will see, some participant understanding was greatly impacted and for others, surprisingly, there wasn't much to discuss.

In the case of the latter, Adriana was one participant who openly commented that she didn't have much to say. On the one hand, this is a surprise especially when seen in context with the other participants who had much to say. On the other hand, however, I can also say that Adriana probably had the greatest understanding of place and sense of place going in to the experience. When I asked her this question she was teaching in an outdoor school that emphasized the significance of place in it’s curriculum. In this way, her assumptions about the connection between place and education may have simply been confirmed, leading her to tell me that she had no final conclusions to draw.

Unlike Adriana, Adam had little or no experience with place and education prior to his time in Norway. During the time of his interviews, he was teaching in Thailand. When I asked Adam this question, he quickly responded that, “Education is very proximal. If it’s not, then there’s no point in learning”. In further discussion, he told me that by proximal, he meant local, and that by local he meant applicable to a specific place. He gave two examples. In Norway, his students were very active, athletic and interested in sport. Because of this, he explained, he used a variety of
different sports and games as a vehicle to explain certain topics in his English class.

In Thailand, this would not have worked. In Thailand, he said that his students were more interested in music, and popular American music specifically. In this venue, he had to reconsider using sports and instead used lyrics and rhythms to teach his students English. This was his explanation of how he made learning proximal, relevant, and applicable to the lives of his students.

Dave took a different approach to his answer. He responded in a way revealed the contrasts between American and Norwegian attitudes toward place both in and out of school. Dave said, “In Norway, people have more a connection to their hometown and their place”. He gave the example of the local professional soccer team and their sponsorship. The team had the opportunity to accept sponsorship from Xbox. The name of the gaming system would have been on the front of the soccer jerseys, and it would have meant big money for the team. Instead, the team opted to accept the sponsorship of REMA1000, a local grocer. This put a virtually unknown name on the front of the jersey (at least relative to Xbox), and meant less money for the team, but the conviction of the team was to support local business. In Dave’s example, the connection is between place and sport, but Dave also said that, “The connection carried through to education, I sensed much more national pride, I got the sense that people were involved in their communities”. The feeling that he got instilled in him the importance of place in education.

As I came to expect from Pat through the course of the interviews, he first responded with a sarcastic (sometimes the sarcasm was a thin veil for a jab)
comment followed by a more thoughtful answer. When he answered this question, he was teaching in a suburban district north of Philadelphia where expectations and stakes are high for students and teachers alike. He said, “Education in Norway was kind of fluffy, and I don’t know if that was a reflection of their socialist government and values, but I’m sure there’s a connection there”. Pat’s use of the word “fluffy” was said in regard to their grading system where students were evaluated based on effort and improvement. This was his sarcastic comment, and I understand where he was coming from given his own educational background and the high value placed on assessment in his current position. After a few moments, he continued and said, “In spite of that, it seemed like people had a much closer connection with their surroundings. They had a greater understanding of their history and are very proud of those things”. While he did not say that he thought these were important ideals to strive for in education, he at least took notice of them and was made aware of them.

Ever the man for practicality, Jimmy took a no-nonsense approach to his answer. During this interview, he was teaching in a well-to-do suburb west of Boston. He said, “Where you are at is a huge matter in how well you do in education. The biggest influence on student achievement levels is the zip code”. This response was influenced by the relative equity in socio-economic status across Norway. Like Pat, he said this might have something to do with the socialist nature of their government, but he also said that it was refreshing to see equality in education. While I don’t know if a semester teaching in Trondheim qualifies him to make this
comment, it is clear that his experience overseas impacted the way he considers place and public education in the United States.

In sum, while place and education is not a tenet of Norwegian education, not is it an area of emphasis in the overseas student teaching program, it seems that the experience of teaching in Trondheim gave each of the participants some greater level of awareness of the significance of place. Even though Adriana did not have any new insights, it is my belief that her old convictions were solidified. And while not all of the participants will be proponents of place to the extent that they will include place within their curricula, I believe that over time, with more experience and seniority in their schools, they will be more likely to explore the features and history of their place with their students.
Chapter 4

WORLDVIEW AND EDUCATION

Introduction

This country has always fancied itself a melting pot. While I’m not sure I agree with that metaphor, there is one thing I cannot dispute. With every passing day, this country is undeniably becoming more and more multicultural. It is a pluralistic society. Nearly everywhere we can see evidence of expanding diversity. Whether it be a newly built mosque or synagogue, or a local community group of a particular heritage that gets together to speak their native language, there is no denying that this is a pot that has new ingredients and spices added regularly. Of course, one of the results of this manifests itself in the classroom of the public school teacher. There are new voices, beliefs, values and interpretations present among the students, and today’s teacher must be prepared to deal with this in some way.

I certainly didn’t grow up in a pluralistic society being west of Milwaukee and east of Madison. As a child, my society consisted of white Catholics who were involved one way or another with agriculture. Diversity to me meant that the church for the Lutherans was down the road and out of town a few miles. I suppose my exposure to diverse backgrounds came about because of my mother’s job. She was a nurse at a 7-12 grade military academy. Here, I met other students slightly older than me who were Hispanic and black and came from backgrounds I wasn’t exposed to in my own school. In fact, I remember 5th grade when Marcellus Jackson
came to his first day of school. He was my elementary school’s first black student. This trend (of little to no diversity) continued through high school. We were mostly white although, because so many different areas fed the high school, we had a small percentage of Hispanic students. My undergraduate experience was no different, and I moved out to Colorado, one of the whitest states in the nation, for my first teaching job. The point is that I was never exposed to a high degree of diversity while growing up, continuing through my undergraduate degree, and to my first professional job.

State College and the surrounding area didn’t strike me as much different from where I grew up in Wisconsin, and most of the undergraduates I knew didn’t seem to come from places all that different. In two years of teaching at Penn State I did not have one student of color, yet I was preparing these students to go to classrooms in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh where many of them would complete their student teaching, and where many of them would deal with highly diversified student bodies. Some of my students opted for something different and were selected from a pool of applicants to complete their student teaching overseas in Trondheim, Sor-Trøndelag, in Norway. Trondheim is the capital city for the county of Sor-Trøndelag, and there are 19 counties in Norway.

I think most of my students were surprised at what they found when they got to Norway. More to the point, each one of the participants in this research stated in one way or another that Trondheim could have been a city in the United States. There were all manner of modern conveniences, professional sports teams and well-to-do people. According to the participants, other than the cold, lack of sunlight and
language change, it was not at all different. However, although the surface revealed little that was different, the participants all agreed that they gained the experience of feeling what it meant to be the outsider.

In truth, neither Norway nor Sweden is especially diverse. They are very much monocultures but are becoming more integrated. This change does not come without dissent. In many conversations I had personally with both Swedes and Norwegians, I cannot count the number of times I heard locals begin by saying, “Well, I’m not racist but...”. In addition, although I experienced no anti-American sentiments in either of my visits, many people I spoke with traced their country’s spikes in immigration to U.S. military action from various parts of the world. Swedes were quick to point to increases in Middle Eastern immigrants in 1991-1992, Somali immigration in 1993, Slavic immigration in the mid 90’s, and additional Middle Eastern immigration from 2002 to the present. In some ways, it seems socialism is not without fault. There was clear disappointment with both federal governments for willingly assisting any immigrant, with taxpayer dollars mind you, to get on their feet.

All of these issues, experiences and stories have a common thread. They all, in some way, relate to the concept of worldview. As defined by Naugle (2002), worldview is a system that “establishes a framework within which people think, interpret and know” (p.xix). Now that the participants have had some experience with diversity, and have experienced being the outsider, I wondered what this might do to their worldviews. I wondered about some of the following questions:

• What was their worldview prior to their experiences overseas?
• What is it like now?
• Is this a topic that belongs in public schools?
• How would you or do you incorporate it?
• How would describe the worldviews of Norwegians you worked with?
• How would you describe the worldviews of the Americans you work with now?
• How did they define worldview?

I interviewed each participant twice on the subject of worldview. We examined these topics and more. The following review of literature helped inform my knowledge of the topic, and guided my questions. As you will notice, the history of publication on the subject of worldview includes extensive research from religious based individuals and institutions. While I will acknowledge those roots in the review of literature, I did not focus my discussions on the topic with the participants around theological issues. Instead, I tried to keep conversations focused on the non-religious philosophical concepts and origins of the word.
Lit Review

In this chapter, it seems relevant again to begin with definitions of the term worldview. Prior to this research, I certainly was aware of the components that provide the make-up of one’s worldview, but I’m not so sure that I would have been able to look at them all and call it a worldview.

At the risk of overkill, I will refer to several different authors have similar definitions of worldview using a variety of language. Most simply put, Sire said, “A worldview is the fundamental perspective from which one addresses every issue of life” (p. 24). Is it OK to drive five miles an hour over the speed limit? Your answer is part of your worldview. Should we discuss issues of multiculturalism and plurality in the public school setting? Again, your answer is part of your worldview. In this definition, it’s a perspective, or a lens. Wolters (1985) said, “Worldview will be defined as the comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things” (p. 2). The framework described by Wolters changes things.

Let’s go back to the two questions asked earlier. A person might think it’s OK to go five over the limit, because that’s not worthy of garnering the attention of most police officers. In a framework, things are a little different. Before answering the question, a person might wonder if it’s light or dark outside. Is it an interstate highway or a residential street? Are there pedestrians? Once the individual funnels the questions through their filter of variables, then he or she can answer. Thus, from Wolters’ point of view, worldview is a touch more complex than previously outlined.
Nash (1992) and Orr (1954) corroborate this idea of a schematic that goes along with a person’s worldview. Nash said, “Worldview is a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality” (p. 16). I think this notion of a conceptual scheme fits well with the idea of the funnel I suggested above in unpacking Wolters’ definition. Orr (1954), I think, finds a happy medium between Sire’s loose definition and the schema-happy definitions of Nash and Wolters. Orr said a worldview is, “the widest view which the mind can take of things in an effort to grasp them together as a whole from the standpoint of some particular philosophy” (p. 3). The philosophy is the scheme, but it seems to have softer edges than a framework. Nonetheless, I still think all of the definitions presented thus far are essentially similar at their core.

Thus far, if we were to put all of these definitions together into one synthesized description of worldview, we might come up with something close to what Kok (2003) wrote. He said, “A worldview may be described as one’s comprehensive framework of basic beliefs about things, but our talk (confessed beliefs or cognitive claims) is one thing, and our walk (operative beliefs) is another and even more important thing” (p. 12). Thus, how we answer the question about going five miles an hour over the speed limit and what we actually do behind the wheel are significant. He goes on to say that, “it is the vision that one almost takes for granted. It is not a scientific or theoretic conception, but a view, a sense that has become second nature” (p. 14). Do we think about what we are doing when we drive 60 in a 55? In the classroom, do we think about what we are teaching the
students or are we recreating the knowledge that we were taught? Is there a conscientious thought process, or is it, as Kok suggests, second nature, instinctual?

I believe it is the conscientious person who has a more complete and developed worldview. Operating on autopilot is akin to the argument that this is the way we do it because this is the way it’s always been done. In order to combat the autopilot, in order to develop a thorough worldview, it is important to consider the words of Dilthey (1957). He said, “The ultimate root of any worldview is life itself” (p. 21). In other words, it is our experiences that form our worldview, and as adults, we can choose to recognize or ignore our experiences. We can select things from the worldview of our childhood that make sense to us and modify those that no longer seem to fit the current schema. In high school, I may have been taught to read the classics, Shakespeare, and other selections from the dead, white, male authors club. However, I am aware that these authors do not fully represent the students that I have taught. Thus, I am going to change my worldview. I am going to change the texts my students read in spite of my experiences. Furthermore, how would the experiences of student teaching in Norway change the worldview of five first year teachers?

Much of the writing on worldview comes from Christian writers and philosophers, and their conceptions of the word reflect religious beliefs. In fact, it wasn’t until I discovered Eerdmans Publishers that I was able to do much reading on the subject. Eerdmans is a publishing company that specializes in “religious books, academic works in theology, biblical studies, religious history, and popular titles in spirituality”. At first, this surprised me, but many people do gain their framework
for understanding the world from religious texts, and a discussion of worldview could easily lead into a conversation about religion, although not necessarily. Some of my interviews with the participants did, however, and it was interesting to take that road. Before I cross that bridge, the literature must come first.

Again, I will begin with the most basic understanding of the connection between faith and worldview. In 1931, Kuyper said, “Every worldview must address three fundamental relations of all human existence: our relation to God, to man and the world” (p. 31). In this context, it is not all that different from the vanilla definition provided by Sire at the beginning of the previous section. Kuyper’s outlook addresses everything that Sire’s does, but it adds the bit about our relation to God. This definition pre-supposes a degree of faith. Without it, a person’s worldview would be incomplete in the eyes of the author.

James Olthuis is a scholar of theology and held a position at the Toronto-based Institute for Christian Studies. During his time there, he wrote on the topic of worldview. He began by defining the idea and said,

“A worldview is a framework or a set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it. This vision need not be fully articulated…it may be greatly refined through cultural-historical development. This vision is a channel for the ultimate beliefs that give direction and meaning to life. It is the integrative and interpretive framework by which order and disorder are judged; it is the standard by which reality is managed and pursued; it is the set of hinges on which all our everyday thinking and
doing turns...it is communal in scope and structure...a worldview
binds its adherents together into community. Allegiance to a common
vision promotes the integration of individuals into a group” (1989, p. 29).

The noteworthy addition to this definition is not the religious tone of it, but rather the nod it gives to cultural and historical development. The reason this particular definition is so significant, is that this is where we can begin to see the connection between place, worldview, and sustainability. Such a large part the discussion on place in education centers on the idea of community and community building, and from Olthuis’ writing we can now establish a connection between the two.

Bishop Newbigin, as his title might imply, was also a man of the cloth who wrote about worldview in an ever increasingly pluralistic society. He saw firsthand the need for discussions of worldview as his positions within the church took him around the globe, and specifically, he spent a great deal of time in India. Perhaps it was this exposure to global worldviews that led him to write on the subject, and I want to start with a piece of his writing that may seem strange at first. He (1989) wrote, “The thing given for our acceptance in faith is not a set of timeless presuppositions: it is a story” (p. 12). I included this to say that the where’s and why’s of the participants’ worldviews comes form the stories they have lived and created for themselves, the stories told to them by their parents, friends and co-workers, and the stories they read about. Or, as Olthius might say, their worldviews come from the stories told to them by those in their community.
Going further, Newbigin explained the importance of the stories. He said, “The Christian community is invited to indwell the story, tacitly aware of it as shaping the way we understand, but focally attending to the world we live in so that we are able confidently, though not infallibly, to increase our understanding of it and our ability to cope with it” (p. 38). In other words, in order to understand the times we live in, and in order to adapt to the changing times, we, as a community (Newbigin would say as Christians), need to be attentive to the way our understanding changes and why it changes as well. This perspective on worldview reminds me of an educator’s rationale for a lesson or a unit. This helps to connect worldview to teaching in the context of a first year teacher’s experience.

Finally, there is the issue of power that can be, and is, associated with worldview. We need look no further than the lack of understanding between the West and the Islamic Middle East. Each side believes their position to be the correct one. Each side believes that they possess the truth. Foucault (1984) said, “Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it” (p. 74). In some cases, those who are proponents of standardized testing in education are successful products of that type of system. In that sense, those people work to perpetuate such a system. It helps to keep the rich, rich.

I think it’s fair to say that an individual would believe his or her worldview to be true. However, unless those issues of worldview are tried and tested, much of one’s worldview has to be considered a guess. Whitehead, “Assumptions appear so obvious that people do not know what they are assuming because no other way of putting things has ever occurred to them” (p. 49). This is the dangerous side of
Foucault’s previous assertion. In many cases, particularly in education, I think no other way has been experienced, and therefore, no other possible way can be imagined. Assumptions stifle creativity, but can promote power.

Going back to Foucault, he explained how these assumptions form. He said, “Episteme may be suspected of being something like a worldview, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposes on each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that all men of a particular period cannot escape” (1972, p. 181). This notion of episteme takes us back to the belief that worldviews are, in large part, dependent on cultural and historical influences. The power is retained via the faction who uses the argument that the way to do things is the way things have always been done. It has helped that particular group be successful, so why change? This belief is held and expressed in a similar way by Nietzsche (1954) who believed every worldview to be a product of its time, place and culture.

As a final thought on the episteme and it’s relation to power in the discussion of worldview, Naugle ((2002) said, “an episteme involves an inescapable set of rules and regulations, a way of reasoning, a pattern of thinking, a body of laws that generate and govern all patterns of knowing” (p. 181-182). The key phraseology are the words “laws” and “govern”. These are the keys to power and control and status quo that Foucault mentions. And so when I put it to the first year teachers, I asked them to think about whether they were more likely to be agents of change in the classroom or accept the status quo. Do they succumb, or do they fight the power with their worldview?
So what is worldview? Is it a personal set of beliefs? A foundation? Is it a matter of religious faith? Is it an issue of power or control? Sire tried to answer all of these things and more and found himself in the midst of a paradox. Sire (2004) concluded his book and said, “It is time to draw together a final definition of worldview. This will not be a definition that tries to incorporate all the characteristics of all worldview definitions. That is impossible, for the very concept of worldview is itself worldview dependent” (p. 121). In spite of this seemingly inescapable Catch-22, he concludes that:

“A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being” (p. 122).

It is these ideas of commitment, orientation, assumptions, realities and foundations that formed the basis of my questions for the first year teachers involved in this research.

**What the Participants Said**

**Definition**

From the review of literature above, it’s clear that there isn’t one agreed upon definition of worldview. There are, however, some basic tenets of worldview
that can be found in each writer’s explanation. In my interviews with the five participants, the very first thing I asked each of them to do was define the word. As in the earlier literature review, there are no identical responses. There are, again, some basic tenets that extend to all definitions, but it’s the discrepancies that interest me.

First, let’s look at what each of the participants had to say. Adriana struggled to articulate her opinion more than anyone else. Ultimately, she settled on this definition and said, “Worldview includes a mindfulness of and education about other cultures, languages, religions and the way people live their lives.” Afterward, we talked about why this was so difficult for her. She believed that worldview gave her trouble because it was intangible. Sustainability can easily be identified by specific actions, but worldview to her is mindfulness, and how does one identify a mindful act? Although she struggled, her idea was in line with what the others had to say.

Pat responded quickly. He said of worldview, “It’s how I perceive the world, my place in the world, and how I perceive the interactions of different people in different places.” He paused and then included more. He said, “It’s any individual’s perception or perspective of how different people from different places interact, occurrences around them and things that are going on.” They are two very similar statements, but I think it’s interesting to note that the first time around he applied the definition only to himself. It was only after he continued that he amended his thoughts to allow for others’ inclusion. This, I think, speaks volumes about Pat. That his initial response applied only to himself might suggest a self-centered
worldview, and I don’t think this is far off base. In earlier research conducted during Pat’s student teaching, he said that his time overseas made him realize that he likes his way of doing things.

In this way, Pat’s worldview was shaped by experience, and it is experience that is central to the definition provided by Adam. He said, “Worldview is largely based on experience and it’s how your experiences help you interpret and understand different cultures, styles of communication, and different systems.” Again, the commonality is that worldview is a cognitive thing. It is mindful; it is a perception; it is an interpretation. In all three cases thus far, worldview is an act of the mind, not of the body. What’s interesting is that later Adam will say that experiences are gained through travel. This is what makes his definition unique.

Jimmy’s thoughts were similar to Pat’s in that they included a big picture perspective. Without being exclusionary to the local, their definitions considered spheres of activity beyond the immediate. When asked for a definition, Jimmy said, “The simplest way to define it is to call it looking at things from a global perspective and the way one thinks about things on a larger scale.” That is a simple way, and it might even be too simple because it is so broad. It could also be that the breadth of this definition makes it the most applicable because of its universality. But again, the thread is the cognitive aspect of worldview, the omission of physical action, and the inclusion of a global perspective.

Dave’s definition was no different, but it did make one inclusion that the others did not. He said that, “Worldview is the general perception of a person or a people have on anything relating to the world at large, or to people’s social, physical
or economical inter-relatedness.” The common themes remain, but Dave added the unique idea of the plural. His definition of worldview included of a group of people. I asked him what he meant by this, and he explained that an outsider might look at the voting record of a particular region – maybe a country, state or county – and that outsider might be able to make generalizations about the worldview of a majority of people from that area based on the results of those votes.

As I said at the beginning of this section, the definitions provided by my participants reflect the same trends as the definitions provided by worldview scholars in the literature review. Among the participants some of the recurring themes included worldview being a cognitive thing, not a physical act; worldview involves consideration of the big (meaning global) picture and perception. Some of the unique inclusions were experience, generalizing about a group, and interaction. I do think that there are differences in the definitions, but not to the degree that they would skew responses from this point forward. In other words, I think all participants were in agreement. From here, we discussed different avenues of worldview. We talked about its presence in public schools and classroom examples. They all had experiences to share.

Norwegian Worldview

I don't know if we, as Americans, romanticize Europe to some degree, but in my experiences and conversations with a wide variety of people, there always seemed to be a conviction that Europeans were more enlightened as people. I don’t know why this is, but it is obviously part of the worldview of the people I have
spoken with. After having heard stories from each of my participants about worldview in the classroom, I thought I’d try to get some sort of comparison to their Norwegian classrooms. I asked each of the first year teachers to try to describe the worldview of their Norwegian students and mentor teachers. The results are interesting and suggest that while they couldn't necessarily define the specifics of the Norwegian worldview, they all shared similar ideas on the development of the Norwegian worldview.

When I asked my participants how different it actually was to teach in Norway, Adriana said that it wasn’t very different at all. Her description of the worldview of her Norwegian students and mentors led her to tell me that she was a bit surprised by them. Of her students she said, “I think my students saw the world as really violent and that came from all the things they saw on television and in the media.” Much like in this country, her Norwegian students were fascinated with video games and television programming that glorified violence. It did seem to her, however, that those students were able to compartmentalize it. She did not find that to interfere with the classroom. Of her colleagues she said, “I think my mentor teachers had a lot of respect for different cultures because of how much they’ve traveled. They were much more open to learning about differences than the students. That helped them to expand their worldview.” This is a theme that has shown itself before, and one that hearkens back to Mark Twain’s line from his novel *The Innocents Abroad*.

When I posed this question to Pat, his initial response was not to describe their worldview, but instead to capture the difference between places. One thing
Pat said about his time in Norway was that it made him realize just how much he likes his American culture and way of living. Before going to Norway, he took many things for granted. In reply to this query he said, “There’s definitely more similarity between my worldview and my students in America versus my worldview and my Norwegian students...we had much different worldviews.” I wanted him to go a little further and tell me what that meant and he said, “It’s Norwegian-centric. My students were from Norway and had a Norwegian view of things.” In spite of this position, he seemed to invalidate it as he continued. Acknowledging Norwegian’s exposure to other cultures he said, “A lot of them have traveled to other countries and even other continents, so they are more exposed to other ideas than we are here in America. They are definitely more globally aware in Norway because of those experiences outside of the country and those interactions with other cultures.” So although their worldview is Norwegian-centric, they were also exposed to a greater number of alternative ideas than Americans. Pat has always been one to say that he is comfortable where he is at and I think this exemplifies his stance.

Dave quickly wanted to point out the difference between the faculty and students in Norway. Understand that Dave had different students than everyone else, and this sentiment might be true, but it is also worth noting that he is the only one who points to a lack of experience among the Norwegian youth. He said, “Norway, at least where I was, is not terribly diverse. The kids come from very similar backgrounds. All of my students got along. They did learn a lot, but it was partly because they were very comfortable as they were so similar.” Dave had a tremendous relationship with his mentor. The got along famously and are still in
contact with one another to this day. Of his mentor, Dave said, “Steinar came from that same background, but he could think in terms of the big picture. He had an increased worldview and a greater level of objectivity because of his age and life experience.” These ideas about his mentor are corroborated by what Adriana said earlier.

At the time of these interviews, Adam was teaching English in his second country. Because he was in Thailand, he would often compare between Thai and Norwegian culture. He did the same in this instance. He said, “Norwegian culture was more like my own than Thai culture, so their worldview was more like mine. Most of them had traveled, had been to different places and knew different things.”

As he continued, he began to address an educational worldview that exists in the two places. Rather than be specific, he offered generalizations that are still valuable insights. He said, “There was a lot of knowledge distributed back and forth between teachers and students, and there is a definite sense that knowledge is fluid in Norway. Here in Thailand, that same sense doesn't exist. I am the authority here and I transmit knowledge to the students.” This fluidity of knowledge is an example of how his worldview shared certain principles with the Norwegians.

Bigger is not always better. At least that’s what Jimmy seemed to imply in the response he gave. He fore grounded his position and stated, “It’s a lot more open, but they really are in a much better position for seeing the world. Because they’re closer to other countries, they have more opportunities to experience things outside of their own country.” In the United States, because we exist from coast to coast, a family is not able to easily travel to three countries in 24 hours if they
designed to do so. He finished on this theme and said, “In America, that doesn’t exist as much, and I really think that’s something that shapes the Norwegian worldview and their global understanding of things.”

In sum, there was disagreement again. Among the students, my participants believed that they were more enlightened because of their experiences traveling and others believed that Norwegian students who were interested in violent video games were no different than other students they had taught. Among the mentor teachers, there was a general consensus that their worldview was more open and accepting than what one might find in the United States, and that this was due to proximity and availability of travel options.

Christian Writing and Philosophy/Teacher Responsibility

After they all suggested that worldview belonged in public schools and recounted examples of worldview discussions in their individual classrooms, I went in a new direction with them. They had all taught in Norway, and they had all had discussions of worldview in their classrooms. I wondered if they believed a teacher had an obligation to address the subject in the curriculum. Should a teacher be expected to conduct class discussions, related to the curriculum, that engage students in an examination of their own worldview? Here is what they had to say.

The responses were again similar, but they fell apart along the same lines. To begin, Dave said, “They should be very much responsible for teaching worldview. This is going to be redundant but we should be responsibly responsible. You’re supposed to have a huge role. We’re talking about developing a moral person and
developing connectivity. You’re supposed to be highly intellectual as far as the worldview.” Like most things, Dave suggested the caveat in the situation. Before he got there he continued, “But the thing is where your own self comes into play is in being more objective so not only giving your own opinion, because that’s what comes through a lot of the time, but giving your own opinion, explaining your own opinion, explaining their opinion, explaining majority opinion, explaining minority opinion, and giving the round full picture so students can develop a true worldview.” This sounds much like what Pat said earlier, in that a teacher might explain his or her side, but not so as to recruit converts, rather to give that full picture. In conclusion, Dave said, “So I would say that the teacher should have a pretty big role in that. I would say in fact that it is a teachers job but to do so responsibly.” Here, however, we get in to tricky territory. Who is the arbiter of responsibility? What determines responsible presentation? When and how can a teacher cross the line to irresponsibility? Dave did not have answers for these types of questions.

Adam, who also has a certain degree of flexibility in his teaching, much like Dave’s role as a substitute, concurred with Dave. He even thought that the act of teaching itself was tied to worldview. He said, “Yes, it’s a part of our responsibility. I think one’s teaching is inseparable from his or her worldview.” When I asked him if he could elaborate on what he meant by that idea, he was quick to respond. He said, “For instance here, in Thailand, some Thai teachers most certainly reinforce their view of female inferiority in class.” Adam and I continued talking and asked him what his classroom permitted him to explore in terms of worldview. I could sense the frustration in his reply when he said, “I can't go very deep here because
my student’s level of English is not proficient enough for a discussion of worldview.”

We were able to end on a positive note when I asked him to think forward. I asked him to imagine a class of his own in this country. Would these discussions occur in a different setting? He said, “In the states, I would not stay away from discussing race or gender in my class. It’s part of my job.”

Once more, the breakdown occurred when I got to the two participants who teach in more conventional brick and mortar schools in the United States. Specifically, the breakdown occurred amidst fears of preaching dogma that one way is right and another is wrong. Jimmy said, “I don’t know if it’s a definite responsibility, because frankly, I think that would be pretty hard for a math teacher to do. In many ways, I feel like to do that is to overstep my bounds or to say that I’m trying to instill my beliefs. They’re not my children.” In this day and age, teachers are expected to fill so many more roles than that of just an educator. They are parents, nurses, counselors and confidants. In his reply, Jimmy seemed to want to stay away from those other roles. He said, “I only see them for 45 minutes a day and I’m trying to carefully guide them in a direction that I consider appropriate and responsible. I don’t want to spend those 45 minutes pushing my beliefs and my agenda because that’s not fair to them. I took time to develop my beliefs; they need time to develop their own.” At this point, I asked him about the students he mentioned earlier – the one’s who made sweeping generalizations about urban students. He was quick to admit that there are certain situations that require action and intervention in worldview. He said, “There’s a difference between pushing my ideals and letting ignorance pass by.”
Finally, we come to Pat who ties up all the ideas of the previous participants. To begin, He said, “Yes, I have a responsibility to expose them to other perceptions. I think that’s a more important idea than anything else to try to keep them open minded and not completely shut down when they hear that we’re doing to study another country’s history.” In this way he demonstrates the ideas of Dave and Adam who perceive a certain obligation to offer alternative worldviews in class. However, as he continued, he moved over to ultimately err on the side of caution and Jimmy. He concluded by saying, “But who am I to say that my worldview is better, or that I’m more enlightened? Maybe there’s a different way of perceiving things that makes more sense to them.”

These participants, who completed their student teaching in Norway, all agreed that educators do have some sort of obligation or responsibility to teach worldview in class. Perhaps using the word “teach” is in appropriate here. It might be wiser to say that the participants all agree that it is necessary for an educator to not shy away from issues that lend themselves to multiple worldviews. In fact, they all seem to agree that the teacher should offer chances to students to examine a variety of vantage points. The one concern, and it was voiced by those participants in what one might consider traditional public schools, was that in-class discussions of worldview could be construed as a teacher intentionally making an effort to persuade students to one specific way of thinking.

Changed Worldview
I have visited other countries, but I have never had the opportunity to reside among locals for an extended period of time. I have always visited playing the role of the tourist. Among the literature on overseas student teaching, many authors claim that an overseas experience changes the worldview of the student teacher, partly because of their full immersion into a culture. In earlier research I found this to be true, even if it meant that an existing worldview was solidified. An affirmation of a belief is still, after all, a change. I asked each of my participants to describe how their experience in Norway changed their worldviews.

As with most things, there are always exceptions to the rules. In this instance, it seemed that Adriana was the exception. She said, “I don’t really know if it changed my worldview, but it certainly gave me another growing experience in my life. Living in another country broadened my cultural awareness.” While a broadening of cultural awareness might be a worldview change in itself, she did not see things that way. I pressed on, however, and asked her if she could talk a little bit about the parts of her worldview that may have been solidified. She said, “Ultimately, I still believe that everyone is the same and that there are good people and bad people everywhere. Norway gave me more information about another culture, but it didn’t really change the way I perceive the world.”

Although Pat, by his own admission, did not have the most positive experience while student teaching in Norway, he still put positive spin on certain things. This was one of them. He began and said, “I think going to Norway clarified some uncertainties that I had in my worldview. It’s like knowing that there are people starving in Africa and then actually being there to see the conditions people
live in.” What follows is the interesting part of the response. And keep in mind that this is the same person who said he’s not sure if he cares about making sustainably responsible decisions in his life. He said, “Now, there is more of a reality to the idea that there are different people around the world, experiencing life differently than me. The change has come because I’ve met the people that my decisions effect.” One would think that type of recognition might lend well to changing habits or thoughts about sustainability, but in this case the connection has yet to be made. I believe that one day he will bridge that gap.

I would describe Dave’s worldview change as “concretized”. Many things in his coursework had previously been abstractions, but his time in Norway allowed him to put those philosophical beliefs into practice. He said, “My time in Norway solidified some of the things I had been reading from philosophers like John Dewey. It made some of my abstract ideas about education more concrete.” He was also quick to provide examples when asked. He said, ”Now I know that you don’t have to be overbearing or tough on kids. Education can be controversial and fun. Now I know that teachers need to work to develop students out and away from their little communities. We need to teach students that there are things beyond their little realm.” In our conversation, he went back to the idea of the obligation of the teacher to push students into spheres that exist outward and away from those that are known and comfortable. He concluded by saying, “There are bigger issues to consider, more things to do, more things that they can help with, and I try to teach them that their opinion matters more than they can comprehend.”
There were two participants who were very clear about the change in their worldview. First was Adam. He said, “My worldview has changed quite a bit because of my time overseas. I’m much more interested in social theory. I think I’ve become a much more academic person and even a better teacher.” I was interested in this distinct change that he noticed about himself and asked him if he thought he might know why or how these changes in his worldview occurred. He said, “My worldview has changed because I’ve experienced so many new things and learned new things as I’ve traveled. That allows me to interpret things in a broader sense. If anyone wants to change the way they think, what they do, what they understand and how they understand people, they absolutely have to travel.” Jimmy also was quick to acknowledge change. He started with, “My worldview is much more broad since going to Norway.” We talked about some of the ways he noticed this change, and this response was the most poignant. He said, “Before I never considered where I was going, but now it’s more like where do I want to go. It’s made me want to teach in a place that’s not as nice as where I am. Sometimes, now, I get so irritated here because I know I’ve been given such a tremendous advantage and it would be nice to know that I gave something back. Now, I want to be a part of things more than ever.”

For Jimmy, Adam and Dave, its almost as if their worldview only included what was expected prior to their experiences in Norway. Upon their return, the worldview of these three shifted to something that could be classified as what might be. The impossible became possible. Even for Pat and Adriana, there was a shift. There was certainly an increased cultural awareness on both accounts, and I think
that leads to a change in worldview. While Adriana claimed that nothing significant changed, it may be that she hasn’t been in a position to recognize that shift or that she hasn’t yet had time to reflect on the shift. Pat did experience the shift, but he has yet to connect it to other parts of his schematic. Pat is an intensely reflective and introspective man, and I have little doubt that the small shift he experienced will later blossom into something much larger and more tangible still.

Worldview in Public School

Worldview is not a testable subject. A student will not find a section of 40 questions concerning worldview on the SAT or ACT. A teacher will not find Worldview among the titles of classes they are expected to teach. In spite of this, worldview can often be found at the core of student responses. Their beliefs can shape the way they interpret literature, historical events, and scientific theory. But if every individual comes to their value system as a result of their unique experiences, and therefore everyone has their own unique worldview, does worldview belong in public schools? I asked the participants for their thoughts on this idea, and again they were unified in their positions.

Adriana is not in a traditional public school at present. Her school is a residential, outdoor-based science and math school in the mountains of California. She includes worldview conversation whenever she can, and thinks it’s important in public schools for a couple of reasons. She said, “I think it belongs. I think it belongs to make sure that American students are open to experiences and what the world has to offer. Limiting that would be a shame. Also, if it weren’t in schools it would
be limiting the perspective of other students. It’s definitely necessary.” So not only
is it important to expose students to a variety of beliefs and opinions, but she also
expressed a concern for what might be considered the marginalized students. From
her point of view, worldview is a topic that helps provide everyone in class with a
voice.

Equally as supportive was Dave. He has always been a strong proponent of
topics and methods that might be considered risky in conservative school districts.
In Norway, he was given a fair amount of rope however, and his reply combines
those two ideas. He said, “Without a doubt it belongs. In my opinion, that’s a step in
the right direction. I used a worldview controversy when I was asked to describe
things about government and politics in the United States to my class in Norway.”
His belief was that had he taught the same lesson in the United States, he would
have been limited to the two or three paragraphs in the textbook that explains the
three branches of government and our system of checks and balances. His way
allowed for discussion of special interest groups and lobbyists that can cause the
system to break down.

Adam, like the previous two teachers, is also in a unique teaching situation in
Thailand. He too supports the presence of worldview conversation in school
classrooms. First he said, “Absolutely it belongs; it’s part of freethinking.” He
mentioned a time in high school when he completed a project for class. After his
presentation, his teacher offered an alternative framework for considering his topic.
In other words, Adam was being asked to look at his topic from the opposite
perspective. After telling me that story he said, “Looking back on that makes me
rethink a lot of things, and I believe that was the start of my desire to branch out with my thinking.”

Pat and Jimmy support the idea, but both have significant reservations. They both teach in traditional public schools with a student body that reflects the conservative and wealthy community. Pat explained his paradox like this and said, “If I want to keep my job, it probably doesn’t, but if I want to do my content justice and have some sort of integrity, I would say absolutely.” This is a theme we’ve heard before. There are things these first year teachers would like to do in class, maybe they’re things they’ve done in class before, perhaps in Norway, but in this country’s educational climate, they shy away from replicating those methods. Pat’s final comment on the subject was an elaboration of the previous point. He said, “It’s not so much to sway opinion one way or another, but to acknowledge that these other factors influence our decisions and our support or protest of what happens around us or what happens with the government. At the same time, it does get controversial. I think it’s sketchy territory.”

Jimmy’s point is very similar, and he doesn’t mince words. First he said, “I totally think worldview belongs in public schools. It drives me crazy when my students make ignorant statements, but it needs to be done throughout the entire school.” His contribution to this discussion is the idea of worldview across the curriculum. A token mention on one class isn’t going to produce any lasting effect. He continued and said, “But right now it’s hard for me to present things on a global scale because my students are 12 years old and all come form a white, wealthy background.” This is the second time Jimmy has mentioned feeling hampered by the
age of his students, but he very clearly mentions the concern that Pat alluded to with his description of the community.

Does it belong? According to these five individuals, absolutely. However, do all five utilize worldview as an essential component of their classrooms? Absolutely not. The reasons vary from a lack of language proficiency, to a lack of maturity, to fear, to being a substitute in a different class every day.

Examples From Class

Knowing that their definitions were so similar, and knowing that they all believed the broader the worldview the better, I wondered if they might have had similar classroom experiences with the subject of worldview. Did the similarities in definition lead to some common classroom experience? I asked each of the participants for an example of how the topic has been approached within the framework of their own situations, and in spite of their apprehension expressed in the preceding section, they all had examples to share.

Adriana sees a new group of students each week. Sometimes they are very homogeneous groups, and sometimes they are quite the opposite. In this particular instance, she was telling me about a very diverse group. She said, “One of my groups was very diverse and we had a cabin with students who were Armenian, Lebanese and Japanese in it.” I thought that was a tremendous opportunity to talk about worldview and get kids thinking about the other cultures present in the same cabin. I asked her if she took advantage of that opportunity. Although she wished she had gone further, she came up with a great idea on the spur of the moment. She said,
“One night we talked about what their proudest moment was. One girl talked about moving to the United States from Beirut. We also talked about how to say good night in their native languages and what it actually meant in that language.”

Dave had a very long story, and in it he gives a thorough explanation of how, what and why. He said,

I have an example from Norway. We read a book called Winners. It’s a story about a young Native American orphan and he was a tough, hardened kid who bounced around from foster care home to foster care home. Finally grandpa got out of jail and the kid went to live with grandpa on the reservation. It’s a coming-of-age story but specifically it applies to anybody in terms of life’s daily trials. On a larger scale it relates to the plight of the Native American both as an adolescent and an adult. What we did in Norway was we used that book as an opportunity to examine the plight of the Native American. We talked about the recent history of Native Americans and their interactions with white Europeans in America. We talked about alcoholism, things that came out of the events of long ago, and we had them watch the movie Smoke Signals. We took that concept that has political aspects and social aspects to it, things that relate to their lives as adolescents, and to further connect it to their lives, I took that plight, the idea of persecuting the Native Americans and applied it to their own culture. In northern Scandinavia there was a race of natives that lived there for a long time and these people who are the contemporary
Norwegians moved in and did the same thing to their natives that we did to Native Americans. We related history topics in America to their own lives so that we answered question why does this matter to me.

I asked Jimmy what exactly he meant by kids making ignorant statements and how he reacts to those situations. What results is a discussion of worldview. He said, “Usually in my class, I end up having to correct them. They make these ignorant statements about kids in inner-city schools who are all in gangs and carry guns and are on drugs. I have to stop them to say that’s not completely fair, but they still don’t understand why someone can’t just work hard to get what they want in every single realm of life.” Again, perhaps the affluent background of his students manifests itself in their opinions and Jimmy is able to provide an alternative perspective. I asked about his curriculum specifically, and he spoke about it in a way suggestive of someone who wishes there were more meat on the plate. He said, “My curriculum has a lot of fairy tales in it, so we don’t do much, but we do read six versions of Cinderella from six different countries. The kids gravitate toward the ones most similar to Disney. I guess the ones that offer gender and class alternatives to the traditional version aren’t as intriguing to them.” With what he is given, that is to say less than desirable material, he still makes an effort to include worldview.

I always thought that social studies would be the ideal platform to throw around alternative perspectives and examine a variety of worldviews. Pat takes advantage of that platform in spite of his trepidation described above. To set the
stage, he mentioned the context of the discussion and said, “We were just going over the Cold War last week and we talked about Korea and Vietnam and the role America takes in other nation’s conflicts.” While those issues are fact, Pat followed through and offered his students a chance to explore an array of positions. He asked his students these questions, “Is that in our best interest? Is it acceptable? Is it necessary? There are a lot of comparisons being made between Vietnam and the Middle East today. Have Iraq and Afghanistan turned into Vietnam? American support is going down and casualties are going up. What is our purpose for being there?” He also had a rationale for this line of questioning that went beyond the purposes of being controversial. He said, “These are questions we address in class and I make sure to consider both sides of the coin. I’m trying to make connections.”

Because of the language barrier between him and his Thai students, Adam isn’t able to have the depth of conversation he might like to in his class. With that said, this does not mean that he avoids worldview in his classes, rather he approaches them in different ways. Thailand has a relatively new democratic system, and being able to voice an opinion is kind of a new thing for his students. He said, “I’ve had to teach them to vote on what they want to study, what project they would rather do, and which answer they think is correct. In order to teach them to vote they have to adapt to my worldview.” I asked him why he thought this was important for them to learn or do, especially when he said, “When I first tried to do this the students would never respond because the idea of voting was foreign to them and they didn’t see how voting could benefit them.” He did, of course, have a reason and explained it along with an outcome. He said, “They had to learn that
voting could make learning more pleasurable. Some classes have adapted and others haven’t.”

It’s not just in his class that worldviews can clash and open doors for discussion. He told this story and said, “One of my co-workers, Ellen, was livid at lunch today because the school’s director asked her to fetch him some water. This is a common occurrence for a high-ranking man to ask a woman to do something and she does it. It’s the Thai culture. But Ellen, who is Scottish, took offense, ignored his request and left the mess hall.” Hearing this, I wondered about how male and female students might be different in the classroom. Are females expected to be subservient in those contexts too? He said, “In my classroom, females talk more openly when they are in greater number. When there are more males in class the girls become quiet, but I think both male and female students can infer a level of equality based on my interactions with them.” He took this opportunity to expose his students to a different worldview and demonstrated equitable treatment for both genders.

Teacher/Student Worldview

Looking back, I said earlier that it is the unique experiences, beliefs and values that shape an individual’s unique worldview. This ultimately allows for two possibilities in a classroom setting. The first is that the teacher and student have worldviews that share much in common. The second possibility is that the student and teacher have worldviews that act in opposition to one another. Given these two prospects, I asked the participants to consider the following question: If learning is
to occur, how important is it for the teacher and students to share a similar worldview, and why? I allowed the participants to define “learning” in whatever manner they felt appropriate, and their responses reflect a duality that resulted in no clear decision.

Adriana’s response is an ideal indicator of the type of two-sided opinion. She immediately saw both sides in her very first sentence. She said, “I think students and teachers can have different worldviews, but if you had the same or a similar worldview it could help you establish a good rapport with your students.” We talked in circles on this topic for quite some time and she was never able to pin down a definite answer that strayed beyond the middle ground. She finally said, “It might make learning easier, or the student might be more willing (to learn), if the worldview were the same. At the same time, if there wasn’t a shared worldview the student could still learn the material.”

Pat stuck to one side, and was convincing in argument. He said, “It’s not necessary at all, and I think it’s all the better if the don’t share a worldview.” When I asked him why he said, “In that way, students and teachers can challenge one another to see the world differently. My goal is to be challenging to my students and one way to do that is to help them see different worldviews.” We talked a bit more, and he wanted to make certain of one thing. He was adamant that although a teacher may challenge a student to see things differently by presenting an alternative or conflicting worldview, that it does not necessarily represent the teacher’s actual worldview.
Adam found himself located firmly in the same camp as Pat. When he spoke, it was in reference to his position in Thailand and the worldview he holds in contrast to the worldview of his students. He said, “For me it was tough to have such a different worldview. Things as common as voting and raising your hand to speak in class are not part of the worldview of these students in Thailand. I had to teach them that, because it wasn’t something they did.” From here, we went back to the idea of a teacher’s responsibility to address worldview in class. I asked him if he thought he was imposing his worldview on his students. Did he think he was offering his students an opportunity to make an independent choice, and was that fair to the students? He said fair wasn’t the issue rather that it was more a matter of necessity to create an environment conducive to learning. He said, “In some ways, I had to manipulate their worldview because it was so different from mine and that was a challenge.”

When I first met Jimmy as a 21-year old undergraduate, he didn’t strike me as the most morally responsible person. Throughout the course of this research, however, I continually found him taking the moral high ground in his responses. He started with this and said, “I’ve come to accept that I really don’t know if everything I’m doing is right, or if everything I believe in is completely right, but it’s worked great for me so far. It’s not my right to say that someone else is wrong.” In much the same way he feared imposing his beliefs on other people’s children he only sees for 45 minutes a day, he clearly stated his opinion on the issue again. I asked him about that. I asked him if it was acceptable for a teacher to say, “That’s not really my job” over and over. Doesn’t a teacher’s obligation extend beyond the content? He agreed
and said, "At the same time I believe certain things are testaments to what
everybody should be aware of and understand so in that sense it’s important. But
it’s also not terribly detrimental if everybody disagrees. In fact, that’s fine. That’s
how the world is." In the end, he almost accepted that difference is preferable, but
he also believed that people should all agree on things like right and wrong.

Bringing it back around full circle, Dave found himself straddling the same
fence that Adriana was on. His initial reaction was to say similar worldviews were
better. He said, “I would say it’s important to share some beliefs. The more you
have in common with a student, the more you’ll be able to relate to them and build
strong relationships.” After he said this, I paused before moving onto the next
question. I thought I should make sure he was finished with his response, but it
seemed like that pause gave him enough time to reconsider his answer rather than
solidify it. Backtracking, he said, “But it might also hurt the student because the
teacher won’t cover any new ideas and the student will fail to get a healthy
understanding of both sides of an argument.”

To restate, there was no clear consensus among the participants. It was
never decided whether it was important for the teacher and student to share a
similar worldview if learning was to occur. They saw benefits, but I think those
were mostly limited to advantages in building rapport and trust, and I think it is true
that a positive relationship between teacher and student can result in greater
learning on the part of the student. However, they also pointed to potential pitfalls.
The primary concern being that too divergent of worldviews could potentially
alienate students to the point that they lose interest in the class and the content.
From these perspectives, I think Pat has the answer. It is good for the teacher to disagree with the class, or to side with the majority, but that it remain clear that it’s for the purposes of playing the role of an advocate on the opposing side. In that way, a variety of perspectives are explored without creating strife between the teacher and student.

Final Thoughts on Worldview and Education

As in the previous chapter, I will conclude with comments from the participants that were given in the final interview. In addition, the context of the participants remained unchanged. In other words, all five participants were in the same positions described earlier. Opinions on worldview and education however did change.

In the previous chapter, Adriana didn’t have much to say in regard to how her overseas experience impacted her understanding of place and education. In this instance, when we discussed a connection between worldview and education, she had something to offer. When asked the question she said, “Everyone is able to be educated if they want to be. If they want to learn something, they can”. I asked her where this came from, and I learned that she previously believed that certain environmental or social factors (poverty, etc) might prohibit a student from learning. Her time in Norway showed her that when those social and environmental factors are removed the potential for educational opportunity grows. I think this might come from her public school background in Philadelphia and her first
experience in a socialist country where, on the surface, it seems that there are no social or environmental ills.

The person who struggled the most overseas was Pat. He will be the first to admit it, but because of this I thought he had the greatest opportunity for growth after the experience. I asked him what the experience did to his understanding of the connection between worldview and education and he said, “It has helped me to be a better teacher having been exposed to different people who have different expectations of how you use different norms”. In other words, he is going back to his issue with the national grading system. But in spite of this mental roadblock, this particular worldview completely clashed with his own, he was able to put it to use in his classroom. His time in Norway connected worldview and education in not only his grading, but also in the ways he dealt with and communicated with those different people and different expectations. It seems that now he might be more open and flexible as an educator.

Adam took this opportunity to emphasize the importance of including discussions about worldview in the classroom. He said, “Discussions of worldview change the way you think, you are forced to think otherwise and that teaches critical thinking skills”. I asked him how he might do this as an English teacher, and he was quick to note that multiple interpretations of literature offer a prime opportunity to go down such a road as the one mentioned in his comment.

While Jimmy simply said, “It broadened my understanding of worldview and it’s connection to education” without offering any evidence, Dave was able to comment on worldview while making a larger connection. He said, “My global
experiences are going to translate back to something local. My students are going to consider international actions and apply it to things that are happening locally”. Seen in this light, Dave’s worldview (gained through international experience) can be used to illustrate concepts about place. In his opinion, Dave thought that worldview and international perspective might be too abstract for students to grasp. But, by relating his experiences to local issues or events in the community, he felt that he could kill multiple birds with one stone. He could broaden worldview, create an interest in local happenings, and teach English at the same time.

In this instance, I think it is clear that each one of the participants underwent a paradigm shift in the ways worldview and education are connected. In one case, worldview and education were tied to place. Because of these comments and responses from the students, I believe that overseas student teaching plays a vital factor in exposing future teachers to the possibilities for connecting worldview and place to education.
Chapter 5

SUSTAINABILITY AND EDUCATION

Introduction

For me, and I think for most people I know, when topics like sustainability or environmental education are found in a school they fit into a two word category: a unit. Those topics were ideas that we studied and learned about for two weeks or maybe three as we went into or came out of another year of standardized testing. By the time I got to college, I began to notice environmental science or outdoor education majors popping up, but nobody was really sure what to do with a degree like that...especially those of us in education.

Therein lies the rub, we (we meaning people of my age) grew up and went through our public schooling thinking that sustainability, environmentalism, and outdoor education was a subject reserved for the three day week that might include a field trip to the Fox River Sanctuary (our local environmental center in rural Wisconsin). It was something separated from everything else. Although we read nature writing, determined species densities based on our collections, researched the ways in which the land was used in the past, learned about the ecology and the interconnectedness of everything we considered, we were never encouraged to make connections to the four core subjects. Every year we considered sustainability in a tangential fashion. It was it’s own thing living on the outskirts of our regular curriculum.
During my time visiting communities in both Norway and Sweden, I noticed opportunity for discussion of sustainability nearly everywhere I looked. After our flight landed in Stockholm and while we were walking to our accommodations, I saw my very first Toyota Prius taxi cab. In a subsequent exploration of the city, I noticed interactive air and water quality meters along the walking path near the harbor leading to the Baltic Sea. In schools, students studied and prepared for careers in geothermal energy. In Norway, transportation was again one of the first things I noticed. There were ski racks in the city buses. There seemed to be bicycle racks everywhere, and there were bicycle lifts on the hillier streets. In the schools, I noticed compact fluorescent and LED light bulbs that operated on motion sensors to minimize energy consumption. Furthermore, the schools seemed to utilize the uniqueness of the area in design and construction. The interiors featured locally grown and harvested (according to one of the teachers) wood, predominantly glass exteriors on southern facing exposures, and concrete, or some other similar heat retaining biomass material, for floors in front of the windows.

Sustainable practices seemed to be everywhere and to me were very noticeable. I wondered if these types of things were as evident to the student teachers. Did they notice them too? If they did, I wondered how they might think about sustainability or how they might define it. Finally, I wondered if these experiences around sustainable practices in school would influence their thinking about the place of sustainability in schools, their classrooms and their curriculum.
Lit Review

Definitions/Foundations

In 1987, the Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, p. 7). While development per se is not the focus of this research, the ideas in this definition still resonate. The primary interest, I think especially for educators, is the idea of being able to meet the needs of future generations. From an English standpoint, it’s not at all different from teaching a simple concept like cause and effect. For example, one student might think about those future generations when considering the effect of driving a mile and a half to school every day and instead start to walk, ride a bike or take the bus. Teaching an English curriculum infused with sustainability will help students ask themselves the question, “If I do this, then what?” Furthermore, as explained by David Orr (1992, p. 17), ecological literacy¹ is being able to ask what’s next. In that sense, teaching sustainability within the domain of English includes sustainability practices and emphasizes reading and writing skills as well. I think sustainability includes ecological literacy and ecologically literate people understand sustainability. The two are closely related ideas. Teaching sustainability in any discipline could be seen as a key piece in helping to build an ecologically literate

¹ In the mid to late 1990’s, the phrase ecological literacy supplanted environmental literacy. There is no significant distinction between the two and are often seen used interchangeably.
generation of students, and student teaching overseas could be a catalyst for this
type of education.

The United Nations (Jickling, 2006) was the first to publish a working
definition of environmental education. Jickling’s workbook uses the definition, “a
process of inquiry and critical thinking used to show how action, no matter how
insignificant it may seem, can go a long way to keep our environment safe and
promote sustainable development,” (p. 26) to help teachers begin to see how these
topics can be brought into any classroom. This definition encompasses Orr’s (1992)
idea of thinking forward as well as the notion of development included in the
Brundtland Report. A very clever video, “The Story of Stuff”, details our society’s
appetite for consumption and the associated consequences. It is a prefect visual
companion to the concepts within the definitions I’ve explored so far.

In his book Richard Louv (2008), author of Last Child in the Woods, talks
about something he has termed “nature deficit disorder”. He identified the
prevalence of personal gaming systems, the overwhelming negativity in the news
(to include all manner of child abuse, abduction and neglect), and the growing
litigious nature of society as the driving factors behind this shift indoors. This shift
is the precursor to nature deficit disorder. His next step was to identify all of the
social ills that can be linked (as correlation not necessarily causality) to society’s
retreat from natural spaces. Among those given were obesity, diabetes, and a
decline in sense of community. While this doesn’t specifically help us come to a
more detailed definition of sustainability or ecological concepts, what it does
accomplish is in painting a picture of what a slowly (or quickly depending on your point of view) eroding environment yields.

Often times, students fail to see a connection between what they're learning in school and the world outside. And sometimes, it is because this connection doesn’t exist. Teachers can teach in abstraction. Engestrom’s (2005) article aims to overcome knowledge that exists for school purposes only. He calls this encapsulated school learning. Teaching lessons that introduce a skill or concept and then relate those concepts to an event in the immediate community (in other words, teaching about place, or sustainability, or worldview for that matter) works toward overcoming the encapsulation of school learning, and this is what Engestrom’s article argues for.

This brings me to the school-wide Nordic skiing trip. Whether or not the students of Charlottenlund Ungdomskole were studying ecological concepts is not what’s important. What is important, and what ties the literature together, is that the school sponsored a 10K ski trip to a hut where the school provided a hot-lunch for all parents, students, faculty and staff that chose to participate. Providing the students a real world experience in nature, outside of the classroom, can help the students make connections between their decision-making, actions and consequential results, all of which are tenets of the sustainability concept.

Ethical Issues and Concerns

As with most topics these days, it seems there is always an ethical issue to discuss. In this instance, there are two ethical sides to sustainability. The first side considers
the ethical aspects of our actions and decisions. In other words, we get into Orr’s (1992) proposition of if we do this now, what happens later? The second side addresses the issue of whether or not it’s ethical to push sustainable values in schools. At one point during the interviews for this research, a participant said that sustainability embodies, “a better way, a more proper way, to live.” In some cases, that very same argument is used to promote religious education in schools. The following section of the literature review will focus on pieces that address the subject of sustainability, and the associated ethical issues, in the classroom.

In his seminal work, Aldo Leopold (1949) introduced the idea of a Land Ethic. As the title would suggest, there is an imposition of values. Leopold suggests that the land itself should dictate its use. This is in opposition to people deciding what land should be used for and going forward with those plans regardless of the practicality of that decision. This piece demonstrates one of the ethical issues behind sustainability in education. For new teachers, this text could help to further the class discussion surrounding the understanding of ethics and controversy within the subject.

Berry’s (1990) text also gets at some of the ethical issues behind sustainability. However, like Leopold, it is decidedly a one-sided argument. In this book, he provided examples of how one person examined the sustainability practices in his own life and then acted accordingly. In one essay, Berry explains why he will never own a computer. With a classroom full of digital natives, it might be difficult to sell students on his arguments, and this is why Sterling’s (2004) work is crucial to include in this section. This book specifically addresses how teachers
(both new and experienced) can help teachers begin the transition from discussing issues and ethics to practical classroom applications. And although I included Jickling’s (2006) workbook above, it fits just as well here. The workbook would function alongside Sterling’s book nicely as they both take a turn away from the abstractions in sustainability and move toward concretization of the subject.

Practical application of sustainable practices can lead to further ethical issues. Sheldon Berman (1997) argued that a large part of a person’s attachment to a place, their value of it, and their knowledge of it is dependent upon their engagement in civic action and consideration of social responsibilities. In other words, an individual’s connection to their place has a correlation to their involvement in things like local government, civic organizations, or church groups. Thus one could argue that an individual with a more sustainable approach to living in a specific place is a more civically and socially minded citizen. Or, to make it as black and white as I can, those who practice sustainability are better citizens.

Through teaching lessons that include sustainability, a spirit of social and civic engagement could be fostered. Berman (p. 62) suggested that, “The roots of activism are not only founded in moral principles but in a deep sense of connection to others and the world around them”, and this again helps to tie everything together...sustainability, ecological literacy, language arts or any subject matter...they all can be explored, learned and taught if teachers are prepared to teach with sustainability as the backdrop, and this is what I saw a tremendous opportunity for in Norway. This is what made me wonder if what they did and saw
in Norway would translate to promotion of sustainable ideas in their classrooms as first year teachers.

In the Classroom

What does the literature say about classroom practice? When I first traveled down this road, I didn't think there would be much written on this subject. To the contrary, I found there was a great abundance of it. The following section includes some highlights of that body of work. I think the place to start is with an essay titled *Two Hats*. In this piece, Hug (1977) illustrates the dilemma facing teachers who see a need to address issues of sustainability in their classroom. Do we openly advocate or simply present issues so the students decide? Both sides, or hats, present an issue that leads to quick dismissal, but the real issue is how to overcome that because teachers have to choose one hat or the other.

Early in my career as an English teacher, I thought that sustainability had nothing to do with me. I thought it was a subject best left to the science teachers. In the next selection, David Orr (1992) showed the interdisciplinary nature of education for sustainability and challenged his readers to think how our content area can meet his claim that “all education is environmental.” And if this is true, that all education is environmental, then Hug is also correct to suggest that regardless of which hat we choose as educators, choose we must.

And regardless of discipline, there is one assignment that can shine light on an individual’s impact on the environment. In other words, this assignment clearly
plots out just how sustainable an existence one leads. The Ecological Footprint assignment comes from a Rees and Wackernagel (1996) text. Some argue that this book is too simplistic in its approach; however, I feel that the manner in which this book is written opens up a familiar access to these complex issues. Furthermore, as I noted earlier, I believe that a simple approach lends itself to use in any discipline, and it also might make first-year teachers more willing to cross into potentially unfamiliar territory.

As in many educational approaches, reflection was a large part of the Rees and Wackernagel assessment. And so, when I did the assignment myself, I found myself looking backward in order to be able to move forward in a fashion I think important. In doing so, I became the embodiment of one of Dewey’s ideas. He (1938, p. 23) said, “How shall the young become acquainted with the past in such a way that the acquaintance is a potent agent in appreciation of the living present?” Seen in this light, the footprint self-analysis works toward this end. By investigating past beliefs and practices as they relate to sustainability, future teachers will be equipped with the ability to help students see, and hopefully appreciate, our present state.

As an English teacher, there are virtually limitless opportunities for exploring sustainability through literature. One way to introduce the topic through literature might be to start with a familiar genre like a fairy tale. Hans Christian Anderson (1984) wrote a tale called The Story of the Wind. In it, one finds the following passage:
"Near the Great Belt there’s an old manor house with thick red walls”, said the wind. “I know every stone. I saw it in the past, when it was part of the castle on the headland; it had to come down. The stones rose up again to become a new wall, a new estate in a different place; that is the red walled manor, which stands there today” (p. 1)

In this fun, quick read, Anderson’s tale easily shows students ways literature incorporates issues of sustainability as well as provide a context as to the length of time authors have been taking up these issues in literature.

A more challenging text than Andersen, Thinking Like a Mountain exposes students to the breadth of ecological writing. In this piece Leopold (1996) offered his readers a more philosophical than practical position on sustainability, and will work well alongside and in contrast to the Andersen piece. For English teachers and students, it helps to paint a portrait of the variety of literature that deals with the subject matter. Thus, when considering environmental literature, or any literature actually, Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) provide a highly recommended and excellent overview of the tenets of ecocriticism. This text lays the foundation for understanding this critical position. Christensen and Long (2008) provided a practical companion to the theoretical texts on ecocriticism. The book was filled with examples of how teachers use ecocriticism to teach literature in the classroom, and a wide variety of grades and levels are represented.

When transitioning from reading to writing, English teachers could move from ecocriticism to ecocomposition. In this seminal piece on ecocomposition,
Dobrin and Weisser (2002) provided a thorough explanation of the position that the act of writing is ecological in its nature and therefore provides a first rate platform from which to delve into writing about ecological and sustainable issues. Teachers can have no better companion to the theoretical text on ecocomposition than this. In this book (Weisser and Dobrin, 2001), teachers can learn about the ways in which other educators across the country use their own environments as writing curriculum and provide students the opportunity to examine sustainability up close. Cox and Ortmeier-Hooper (2009) offered ideas on how to make ecocomposition more concrete for students. By offering students the chance to write for a local environmental agency, the students can practice writing collaboratively for a variety of audiences and purposes as well as accomplish a practical goal.

In a similar vein, Rowland and Millner (2009) made more practical suggestions for application of the theory of ecocomposition. These applications, unlike those in the Cox piece, focus on looking at the self and reflecting on the writer’s own sustainable practices. In a fine article, Opperman (1999) widened the lens of ecocriticism. In fact, the article argued for a more interdisciplinary approach to ecocriticism, not only one that ties ecological issues to English, but one that ties ecology and sustainability to all humanities and arts in addition to the sciences. Complementing Rowland and Millner, Daniel Owens’ book (2001) emphasized the need to make sustainability a fundamental tenet of curriculum not only in English but also across all disciplines. Further on, he suggested that students will develop a sense of stewardship and concern for the environment inherited by future
generations, and this hearkens back to Berman. This sense, Owens argued, is
developed through writing.

Across other disciplines, there are many options to look at. Laird Christensen
and Hal Crimmel (2008) edited a book called *Teaching About Place: Learning From
the Land*. In this work, the authors present many and varied examples of place-
based education. The authors represent a wide variety of regions from around the
country. The contributors span the nation from Los Angeles to Maine and primary
to post-secondary grade levels. In each case, the authors relay their experiences,
and sometimes experiments, in having their students learn more about their place.
While some were more successful endeavors than others, they all offered students
an opportunity to examine the role of human beings as well as the unique qualities
and characteristics found in each specific place. By studying place, the teachers help
their students to understand how to live more sustainably in it.

I believe that English educators, and all educators for that matter, have a
responsibility to expose students to ideas and engage with those ideas as they are
situated in local and global communities. Examples of this, local engagement, can be
found in both of the Christensen (2008a, 2008b) works. The teachers in those
pieces had students examine local issues that pertained to sustainability and taught
them using reading and writing as the means toward their ends.

In this light, all educators who employ sustainability as a thread that runs
throughout the curriculum can contribute to an ideal of Aldo Leopold. He believed
that, “Citizens have rights but also a responsibility to try and understand how our
own shadows fall across a hundred tiny worlds” (Leopold, in Christensen, 2008, p.
xvi). Sustainability needs to be a component of public school education, and if that is going to happen then we need to train teachers that are equipped to do so. This includes teachers of English. Thomas Friedman, author, columnist, economist, etcetera, published *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* in 2008. In it, he suggested that 2008 was Year 1 E.C.E. (Environmental Climate Era). He makes economic, political and even educational arguments that support his case for what he termed to be a necessary Green Revolution. A part of this revolution included changes in educational practices. Moving forward, it makes sense that English education can and should do its part in re-thinking not only what, but how we teach. It seems that education and sustainability have a place in this revolution. In this way, if Friedman is correct, sustainable concepts in education will have positive impacts on global economy, politics and of course climate.

The Connection

The link between English, ecological literacy, and sustainability might appear nebulous at first. Sometimes I still think it is. But, if we consider what Golley (1998, p. 23) said, the murky waters eventually settle. He said, “The recurring idea is connectedness. No process or object is isolated. All are linked and, even more important, are embedded within other processes and objects.”

John Dewey helped in making practical suggestions for further establishing this connection. Dewey (2001, p. 8) said that, “We cannot overlook the importance for educational purposes of the close and intimate acquaintance got with nature at
first hand.” This is highly suggestive of a curricular hybridization in which sustainability, ecological literacy and language arts can and should be considered together. If society were to move toward a more sustainable existence, then our behavioral, and of course our educational, patterns would have to change too. On this matter, Dewey (1936, p. 7) ultimately said, “The moral responsibility of the school, and of those who conduct it, is to society.”

Furthermore, exploring local issues, in other words studying one’s place, is essential for ecocomposition. Dobrin and Weisser (2002, p. 587) note that, “Ecocomposition must be about more than simply bringing nature writing texts to the writing classroom; it must be about the act of producing writing.” Or, as suggested by Killingsworth (2005, p. 364), “Writing takes place.” Investigating the local helps to concretize writing strategies like persuasion, argumentation and follow a simple strategy like claim-data-warrant. However, if high school students are to reap the benefits of such a curriculum, it is first necessary to equip their teachers, and overseas student teaching might be what equips them.

All of these ideas (looking to the past, gaining a close relationship with nature, environmental education, interconnectedness and a Green Revolution) are ones that take place, in part, in the classroom. But it is outside of the classroom in the communities these teachers will work in that the action takes place. Place-based educators Mitch Tomashow (2002) and David Sobel (2004) argued that the backyard is the place to take up these issues of sustainability. Tomashow (p. 81) argued that studying locally first would help to concretize larger, even global issues of sustainability. For example, considering the sources of foods eaten on a daily
basis might help students of these future teachers to better understand the local delicacies when reading a novel like *Things Fall Apart*, a novel that takes place in Nigeria.

A common thread that runs throughout all of these ideas is that of change. We’re in the midst of climate change, seeking societal and behavioral change toward sustainability, and changing the approach to education. Change is necessary even when things aren’t necessarily broken. They could always be better. David Korten (2006) has ideas that are similar to Friedman’s, but he spells out the bottom line in more basic terms. He said, “The key is to change the stories by which we define ourselves” (p. 18). In large part, our society has defined ourselves as a society built and trained for consumption and consumerism, and the arguments against this consumptive consumerism are many and long standing.

Maxine Greene (1995) looked at it this way and said, “We have associated the past with simple transmission, with communication, with initiation, with preparing the young for the task of renewing a common world” (p. 3). This is, I believe, the old way. Ivan Illich (2002), without mincing words, took those ideas one step further. His contention was that, “School has become a planned process which tools man for a planned world, the principal tool to trap man in man’s trap” (p. 110). Even Rousseau (1956), almost 250 years ago, saw the traps Illich referred to. He said, “Prejudices, authority, necessity, example, the social institutions in which we are immersed, would crush out nature in him without putting anything in its place” (p. 11). The new way, the way beyond the traps, the social institutions common in our world is one that teaches complexity, exploration, experience and the task of
creating a new world. The marriage of English education, of all education, and sustainability can help move toward those ends.

A decade ago, recognizing the need for this type of change, The Earth Charter (2000) was issued. A portion of it read, “We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” A student teaching experience that offers the opportunity to embrace the combination of sustainability with teaching can be a part of creating this type of society.

**What the Participants Said**

Definition of Sustainability

I thought it would be interesting to begin each interview with a simple question: What does sustainability mean to you? I did not correct or question any of the definitions, and I hoped that this would give me a baseline understanding of the perspective from which the participants starting from. I also hoped it would give me a quick answer to some of the questions posed previously. Namely, did they notice the same things in the schools and community that I did? Regardless of their definition, the next thing I asked them was to rate the importance of sustainability on a scale of 1 to 10. Although candid, the responses were not what I expected and reflected more or less two camps of thought on the issue.

I expected the participants to comment on things like resources, the environment or pollution in their definitions, and I also expected each of them to say
that it was of the utmost importance. Some of the responses were exactly that. When asked to define sustainability, Dave said, “Sustaining ourselves, our society and the earth altogether in a balance through action, through education and interaction with people around us and the environment, ultimately achieving preservation. Its importance is a 10.” Also offering a response that fell into the category of what I expected was Adriana. When I asked for her definition, she said, “Sustainability means the way that a human interacts with their environment in the most cohesive and natural way. It means living in or living with nature rather than doing things opposed to nature. It means trying to help the environment by using renewable resources and making wise choices based on the environmental outcome.” Again, these were environmentally minded responses and are examples of the type of response I assumed I would get from everyone. This was not the case.

Two of the participants placed their responses in what I would consider a murky area. Their definitions could be construed to include beliefs identical to those noted above. The following two responses are also vague enough so that they might be applied to virtually anything. Jimmy struggled to not use the word in his definition. Ultimately he decided that, “It’s the ability to perpetuate one’s self or one thing. It’s long lasting.” Jimmy has always been one to opt for the shade of grey rather than choose black or white, and his definition for sustainability is no different. Pat also suggested a definition for sustainability that could be applicable in nearly any imaginable circumstance. He said that sustainability is, “Being able to continue for a prolonged period of time whether it be some form of life or a particular system continuing forward into the future. I think it’s about as essential
as anything. It’s probably a ten, but do I revolve my world around sustainability as much as I should in action or even thought? Probably not.” Pat’s response is interesting in that while it alludes to concepts that Dave and Adriana spoke about, it also allows for alternative and broader conceptualizations. What’s more, Pat allowed us a peak into his own life and made mention of the idea that he probably doesn’t make sustainable responsible decisions in his day-to-day life.

Completing the transition from environmentally based, to vague, to something entirely different, was Adam. His way of conceiving sustainability was exclusively limited to that of an economic one. When I asked for his definition of the word he said, “It’s a lifestyle. If I put out more money than I make, I’m not going to make it very long. Sustainability is all about the economy, but you can apply it to anything. I’d rate its importance at a 7 or 8.” When we spoke, there was a considerably lengthy pause after the word “lifestyle”. I thought he might transition to a more earth friendly definition after that, but he took an unexpected turn relating it to dollars, cents, and the economy. His later responses will reflect this belief too. So while I got some expected responses, there were also those that allowed for the inclusion of what I expected, and there was one that caught me completely off guard. This promised to be a good discussion among my participants.

Sustainability and Ecological Literacy

In my time, I’ve had many conversations with a variety of people on the subject of sustainability. Invariably, the topic of ecological literacy comes up, and lots of questions rise to the surface. How do the two ideas mesh? If you are
ecologically literate, does that mean you practice sustainability? Can you be ecologically literate and not practice sustainability? From the opposite frame of reference, if you act sustainably, does that mean you are ecologically literate? Or, can you act sustainably and be ecologically illiterate? The relationship between these two ideas clearly allows for several different permutations, all of which, I think, can be valid in one case or another. As such, I thought I might ask the participants what they thought the relationship was between sustainability and ecological literacy. Their responses were surprisingly uniform.

In one way or another, the participants that answered the question all suggested that ecological literacy is theoretical, while sustainability is practical. Adam started things rolling and said, “Sustainability is a practical application of ecological literacy. Ecological literacy is a knowledge base of ecological issues, and sustainability includes the skills that are required to put everything together.” Dave and Adriana concurred. Dave said, “Sustainability is the action and ecological literacy refers to the knowledge one can obtain in order to act sustainably.” Adriana echoed those thoughts and added, “Sustainability is the way you live your life and ecological literacy is the knowledge behind it.” So in some ways, it seems that these participants view the two concepts as related, but in the way that architectural plans are related to the actual building of a house. What I mean to say it that while they both operate in the same realm, they function as two very separate entities. Pat and Jimmy were both unfamiliar with the phrase ecological literacy and thus were unable to suggest any relationship between the two concepts.
Personal Sustainable Acts

Throughout my conversations with the participants, I think I failed them in leading the discussion. I think I was guilty of the same oversight that I experienced when I was in school. I treated sustainability as something abstract or as a separate subject. My questions treated the subject as “something else”. Unfortunately, I recognized this a little too late in the process and I wasn’t able to make it a personal issue sooner. When I did make the change, I asked the participants what sustainable acts they participated in daily.

Adriana’s entire school functions around the idea of sustainability, and thus her entire way of living should enact sustainable principles. She was quick to point out, however, that there was much to be desired if the school was to actually practice what it preaches to its students each week. She said, “In our school we use perma-culture, and we compost throughout the kitchen. In a moment of honesty though, I think that High Trails could do a much better job of being sustainable and modeling sustainability, because I think you should practice what you preach.” If this was the situation for her, the one who I would have expected to most embody sustainability in her life, what would it be like for the rest of them?

Dave is a very conscientious person, and so I expected a multitude of examples in his response. His acts, however, were quite run of the mill. It’s his rationale that stands out to me. He said, “I recycle. I try not to purchase anything that comes in a bottle. I don’t throw away clothes, but I donate them to local charities or friends. I turn off lights, and keep the heat low in the winter. I ride my bike to work in the summer. In addition to being sustainable acts, these things help
keep my expenses low, so sustainability in a lot of ways helps me save money where I can.” At one point he told me that his friends make fun of him when they come to visit, because they know they need to dress warmly if they plan to stay at Dave’s house for any length of time. What he does add in his response is the monetary benefit of acting sustainably. As he sees it, these acts are not only good for the planet but for the pocketbook as well.

It’s always enjoyable to talk to Pat. He tends toward a self-deprecating sense of humor, and that came out in these conversations of sustainability. I asked him what he did on a daily basis that might reflect a sustainable mindset and he said, “I try not to take too long of a shower. I try to keep lights off when I’m not in a room. I’ve started to buy those more expensive light bulbs and I’m trying to but a car that gets better gas mileage.” We talked a little more after he said it didn’t seem like he contributed too much. He was the one who was always questioning whether or not he really cared enough to make changes in his life. I joked about making a change that would get him to move out of his parents house, and that seemed to re-light the fire. He said, “I even live at home and that in itself is a sustainable act, although that’s not the reason I’m here. One change I could make is to use the re-useable bags at the grocery store. I build up that stupid pile of plastic bags, and I do recycle those after they accumulate, but I still feel guilty.”

From the onset of our discussions on this subject, Jimmy was...I don’t want to say unwilling, but he certainly was the least comfortable with this topic. Worldview, teacher preparation, and place seemed to put him more at ease. I think that because he thought of himself as unschooled in sustainability that he often shied away from
exploring a more thorough answer. When I asked him this question he said, “I usually post my homework online. I have my students write down their notes instead of printing them off. I recycle. I guess I don’t really do much.” On the contrary, I think he does quite a bit. He minimizes paper consumption above and beyond the constraints placed upon him by his green school, and he recycles. In my town, we have free access to recycling, and I know of several people who refuse to do the work to keep recyclables separate from trash. If more people only did what Jimmy did…

**Ethical Issues and Concerns**

Relationship Between Sustainability and Worldview

All of our conversations about sustainability came after we talked about worldview. I wanted to see what the participants thought about the connection between the two subjects. I admit that on the surface sustainability, worldview and place seem like completely different subjects. And they are, but they do overlap in many places, and I wondered if my participants saw this connection or if they viewed all of these topics as their own separate entities.

The most nebulous answer I got was from Dave. It almost sounded like he viewed them as one in the same. I wasn’t sure where he was going with the response, so I asked him if an individual needed one in order to have the other. In other words, was one prerequisite? He said, “Sustainability and worldview are interconnected knowledge. The relationship between those two things is circular.” Adriana, however, separated the two and suggested that one lies within the other.
She said, “Sustainability is definitely a part of my worldview.” So it seems that to some there is an ecological relationship and to others there is almost a chicken-egg relationship.

In Thailand neither relationship worked. Adam wanted to talk specifically about how this relationship works in Thailand. I tried to get him to speak in more generalities, but he was focused on his present situation, and I understood that. To start, he said, “The worldview in Thailand is very narrow, they’re not aware of the rest of the world. Because of that, I think they have a strong association with place and sustainability.” Although they have a strong association with sustainability and a strong connection to their place, he mentions economic gain again, and this might start to explain why he situated sustainability in terms of economic realms. Of the Thai people he said, “They depend on nature for their livelihood, although I don’t think most of them are very conscious of it. They certainly notice when two or three hundred year old trees are cut down, but they know they cannot fight against it because it brings revenue to a poor area.” So there is a relationship in Thailand, but it seems as if both parts of the relationship are in large part ignored by the people.

Pat and Jimmy both took their time with their response, but Pat seemed to come to a conclusion that he was satisfied with. He said, “If you’re thinking in terms of sustainability, I would think your worldview is more developed. If you think about sustainability, you’re probably pretty conscious of your place in the world and your contribution to society.” Jimmy never seemed satisfied with his ability to connect the two and so he gave a two-part answer. He first said, “In order to have a worldview you have to be malleable, so I don’t think the two ideas work well
together. In some ways they’re mutually exclusive.” I don’t think he wanted to believe that. His follow up almost seemed like a way to make amends for not finding a positive relationship. He said, “I think most people want to and end up doing what is right in a given situation.” Jimmy genuinely believes in the good in all people. Whether it comes to worldview or sustainability Jimmy wants to believe that people will be accepting and considerate.

Relationship with Nature/Environment

One of the purposes of sustainability is to conserve resources and preserve natural, wild, and open spaces. The existence of these types of places helps to allow for people to have access to nature in perpetuity. I wondered if the participants ever thought about a relationship with nature and what the benefits of such a relationship with natural places might be. I asked them what they thought was the significance of an individual’s relationship with nature. Again, Dave was quick to reply as he felt at ease with this subject. He said, “A relationship with nature is both significant and important. If an individual has a proper or improper knowledge of nature and their surroundings, that will influence how they choose to interact with it, and they will choose to either serve the benefit or degradation of nature and the environment.” Significant and important, indeed. In these conversations, there is always room to consider, “What if?” After hearing Dave’s reply, I asked one of those types of questions. In essence, I asked him what if all this is wrong? What if all this business about greenhouse gasses, climate change and resource depletion is wrong? What if we’re doing just fine and this is all just part of the cyclical nature of the
planet? Dave made a great point and said, “If all of this is wrong and we start investing in green technologies and start leaving the smaller imprint on our surroundings, and live more sustainably, I don’t see a downside to being more conscious about our health and the environment. Why roll the dice when all the odds are in favor of the house?”

Adam allowed that the relationship was significant because, “A person is inevitably shaped by their environment.” As such, Adam suggested that an individual, who doesn’t know nature and doesn’t know their environment, doesn’t know himself. Another way to say it is to know nature is to know oneself. Adriana talked about how she tries to encourage that knowledge of self when her students come to the mountains from the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles and San Francisco. On the importance of a relationship between nature and an individual she said, “It’s important. My students find things out about themselves once they develop a relationship with nature. They can find new love for themselves. They can learn how it feels to be outside, and it’s important to feel good when you’re outside.”

Adriana talked often about her students. Sometimes they were eager and excited to be there, not wanting to leave when the week was up. This was most often the case with her less well off students. Her more affluent student, however, would often step off the bus into the wilderness and wonder where was the person who carried their bags to the cabins. Those students would also repeatedly mention how they couldn’t wait to go home. I wondered about those students, and I asked Adriana if there was any hope for students like that. Was there any hope for those
students to not only have a relationship with nature but also embrace sustainability? She said, “There is hope for my students from Los Angeles or San Diego, but they need to have an environment where they are educated in sustainability and conservation. When you know where things come from and where things go, it will help them think about consuming more things.”

Even Jimmy suggested significance in the relationship. I say “even Jimmy” because throughout both of our conversations on sustainability he was least comfortable with the topic. When I asked him about the importance of the relationship he said, “I think it’s important because a relationship with nature shapes the individual. It shapes how you’re going to react and exist in the world. My students don’t get outside much, if at all. I don’t think I have anyone in class who is a hunter or anybody who does anything outdoors.” What’s interesting to me is that it seems to me that he thinks it odd that he has no hunters or outdoorsmen, yet he doesn’t want to or know how to or encourage the use of place or nature in his classroom and curriculum.

Finally, we come to Pat, and he always seems to have a way of putting things into perspective and giving things certain clarity. On the subject, he said, “We better be concerned about our relationships if we’re looking for the world to continue in the way it’s been going and you want generations to come to have livable lives.” Holding true to form, he threw in a caveat and was quick to point out, “the importance of that idea lies within each individual. A person could have all the knowledge in the world about the negative effects certain actions have on the planet and simply choose not to care. I think there are plenty of people out there who
know the ethics of their actions and how that impacts nature, but they just don't care.” Even Pat, in previous responses, admitted that he wasn’t sure of how much he cared.

Traveling and Sustainability

The ideals of sustainability imply certain things, one of which is to minimize one’s impact on the earth. This poses one particular issue with each of the participants in this research. The issue works like this: they all did their student teaching in Norway; they all took commercial flights to get there; air travel is one of the leading contributors of greenhouse gasses; they all aim to travel overseas again; Adam is already teaching overseas. Thus, by virtue of their student teaching and their future plans, they will be working against sustainability on this planet. Because of this conundrum, I asked them what they thought the relation ship was between travel and sustainability.

Dave and Adam had similar approaches in their responses. Dave talked about traveling locally first, mentioning how he walks when he can or rides his bike in the summer. Because of these acts, he feels that he kind of offsets any air travel he may take part in. When pressed to answer, however, Dave simply said, “Traveling the world and flying from place to place does go against the ideas of sustainability.” Adam agreed with that assessment, but he was less inclined to take any individual responsibility and almost pleaded ignorance on the issue. He said, “Economically, teaching overseas is sustainable. Is it good for the planet? I have no idea. I do know that air traffic is one of the major producers of greenhouse gasses.”
Although he recognized the pollution caused by air travel, he failed to connect the dots to his own travel overseas for teaching positions. And so we further illustrate the conundrum in that we want to have overseas and intercultural experiences, but at what cost and is that cost worth it?

In a related topic of discussion on the same subject, we began to work our way toward conversation surrounding affluence and poverty and the relationship to sustainability. The assumption being that more affluent people have the means to travel more, we made the jump to this part of the discussion, and I asked the question is affluence sustainable. Adam was succinct in his reply and I think also influenced by his current teaching position. He clearly stated, “Affluence is completely unsustainable.” Jimmy’s ideas on this issue took a turn that veered away from everyone else. He viewed sustainability not as a component of planetary health, but as a means to perpetuate a standard of living. He said, “If you don’t have a lot of money, it’s a lot harder to sustain yourself. If you have money, or you come from a more affluent area, it’s much easier to sustain yourself. Sustainability is easier when you are more affluent or better off.” In other words, the rich get richer. When I pushed him toward thinking globally on the subject, however, he quickly came to the conclusion that, “Poverty is sustainable and affluence is unsustainable.”

Simple vs. Complex

I ended nearly every interview with the same question. Because some of the participants felt very at ease with the subject and others were straying so far out of their zones of comfort, I wanted to get an idea of whether they thought the concept
of sustainability was a simple one or a complex one. Particularly when I think about someone who might not be too aware of basic principles of sustainability, I can imagine that it might seem a wildly complex and daunting subject matter.

First, there was Jimmy. Sustainability is about as real to him as a million dollars is to me. In other words, neither one of us can imagine it. In his typical understated fashion, Jimmy decided that sustainability must be very complex. I asked him why he thought this and he said, “Anything that encompasses this much can’t be simple.” The other participants tended to walk both sides of the fence when faced with the same question.

Adam, who is teaching in Thailand, said, “From a personal standpoint, it’s very simple. But when I start going beyond things like finances and start thinking about carbon footprint and climate change it all becomes very complex.” Again, in order for sustainability to make sense to him, he frames it in terms of dollars and sense, and I think that is terrific because it potentially allows for a jumping point to more complex issues like carbon footprints. Perhaps if he becomes comfortable with one aspect of sustainability he will begin to branch out to others.

Adriana, who teaches sustainability at the outdoor school, struggled with this question. Initially when I asked her, she couldn’t arrive at an answer. A couple of days after our conversation, however, I received an email from her. She stated that she had been thinking a lot about the idea of sustainability being simple or complex. Ultimately, and this is from her email, she decided that, “When teaching sustainability to students, it should be taught and displayed in a simple manner to accommodate and allow learners to understand the basics of the subject, even
though sustainability itself is a complex subject.” So in some ways, it seems that she thinks along the same lines that I do when it comes to Adam. She sees complexities, but also recognizes that students (and perhaps even adults) should be eased into the ideas.

Initially, Pat sounded like he was repeating Adam’s thoughts. He said, “I think it’s both. It’s simple because facts say that in certain instances things are very black and white. But it’s complex in ways because how do I know exactly what my carbon footprint is?” Next, he took a turn back to our conversations about place and tied it into the current discussion on sustainability. He said, “Earlier you asked about where my water comes from, and I don’t know that. There are so many things that I am ignorant to that I can’t possible have any idea of how my actions are changing the world and affecting sustainability, and that’s why I think it’s complex.” Thus far he has acknowledged simplicity and complexity, but his final comment brings the issue home. Ultimately, it comes down to personal choices and beliefs about social responsibility. Pat concluded his thoughts and said, “But as I look to buy a new car should I buy the car that gets 15 or 30 miles to the gallon? There is a simple decision to make there, but do I care? I don’t know.” Perhaps the complexity is less about facts and figures and more about getting people to care.

**In the Classroom**

In Schools

The next place we often went in our conversations was to look at the idea of sustainability in schools. Should it be in the curriculum? Is school an effective
venue? These were the directions our discussions took and again, although there was consensus that public school is an appropriate place and that sustainability should be in the curriculum, there were also some additional opinions that spread widely across the spectrum of beliefs.

I want to start with Jimmy and Pat, as those two participants were forced beyond their scope of practice on this topic. This was the least comfortable of the four topics for them to discuss, and I want to restate that this was not because they lacked opinions, or were contrary to other participants, but rather that it was simply a subject with which they had little previous experience. In spite of that, however, Jimmy still conceded, “It’s very important for it to be in school, particularly if we’re talking about knowledge and integrity.” In his reply, Jimmy’s use of the word knowledge refers to ecological literacy (discussed below) and integrity refers to action. Pat’s thoughts were aligned with Jimmy’s, and he was even willing to take things a step or two farther. First, he said, “It’s possible, worthwhile, and even essential to have this subject in the classroom. I don’t think there’s any reason for us to shy away from the subject. I also don’t think I would parade around my personal beliefs. In fact, I would probably go back and forth just to play devil’s advocate.” Thus in order for kids to develop their own opinions on the idea, to encourage critical thinking on the subject, Pat is willing to take up both sides of the argument even though he admits that sustainability is not his strength, which I think is the hallmark of a good teacher and one who is willing to learn sustainability.

When he continued, he reflected upon his own experiences with sustainability during his high school years. It could be that because of the relatively
limited exposure he had to the concept that these ideas are so abstract to him now as an adult. He said, “I don’t even think I knew what the word meant when I was in high school. The idea of sustainability was not presented to me until I got to college, but you could start with little kids in elementary school.” It might also be that by suggesting starting in elementary school he is saying that he doesn’t want students to be as disadvantaged as he was and is (my interpretation of his situation).

Adam’s response to these questions was interesting. To begin, he agreed with everyone and said, “It is incredibly important to have sustainability in schools.” Perhaps it’s because of his international perspective, or perhaps it’s because of his decidedly economical slant on sustainability, he suggested that dollars and sense would keep sustainability out of schools. He said, “I would prefer sustainability were in schools, because it teachers things like inspiring interest in local government and an interest in the world around us, but I don’t think it ever will be.” His thought was that if there is no economic incentive for sustainability to be situated in public schools, then it never will be.”

Adriana was, predictably, a strong proponent of sustainability in schools. I say predictably only because of the type of school she works for. Her job at High Trails Outdoor School is to promote sustainable ideals and concepts during the weeklong curriculums. She said, “It’s really important to have in schools. It’s so important for kids to know where things come from and where things go. It’s important for us and for generations to come.” Where she went next, however, caused a bit of concern for both her and me. What she said was, “I’m concerned about the future and living sustainably is a more proper way of living. It’s as
important as teaching your kids manners, and this is another way to behave in life.”

When she said this, we began a lengthy discussion about teaching values and her description of sustainable living as more proper. We talked about the difference between teaching values through the bible and teaching values through sustainability. We never reached any conclusion.

Finally, Dave also agreed that sustainability should be in schools and said, “I think school is a great venue, if not the only venue that kids might be exposed to sustainability, and I think at school it’s very important.” I asked him if he thought it was an effective place and here he changed tones. He said, “Sustainability is not as effective as it could be in public schools in fact it is subpar. I didn’t get introduced to the idea until college. It is a place that is potentially very effective for promoting sustainability, but it has been underutilized thus far.” Because of this, and because I know how important sustainability is to him, I asked Dave what he would do if he had his own classroom. How would he bring it in? His reply was a bit of a shock. He said, “In an English classroom you can’t spend a whole lot of time on sustainability itself, but you also can’t ignore it. You can acknowledge the connection that connection that literature has with worldview and acknowledge how that will influence perceptions of sustainability.” Dave, also a strong proponent of sustainability, is willing to give sustainability what I would call a token nod in an English classroom. Certainly, this is not what I expected.
Examples from Schools

Because I don’t speak Norwegian or Swedish, I was unable to tell exactly what was being said in some classrooms. This did not mean that I could not pick up on certain ideas about sustainability from the school itself. Thinking about this, I wanted to ask the participants what they thought students could learn about sustainability as a result of going to school. Putting the curriculum aside, what could students learn about sustainability just by showing up and looking around?

Jimmy struggled with this one, and although he could come up with no definitive answer, he was able to make a point that rings true to all topics and subjects. He said, “Even though I think school is an effective environment to teach sustainability, but ultimately it comes down to the choices an individual makes.” In other words, I think, he is restating the old adage that you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink. Even though students might be surrounded by sustainable ideals all day long at school, the individual must make sound decisions on their own.

Pat teaches in an environment most similar to where Jimmy finds himself. When I posed this question to Pat, he didn’t have the same difficulty in answering, but he did struggle with how to get students to buy in to these sustainable practices on their own. He said, “My district has decided to put paper restrictions on the teachers, but that was more of a financial decision than a sustainable one.” He wondered if that was something the students even noticed. After reconsidering, he said, “I suppose schools could encourage kids to take the bus to school instead of driving themselves, although I don’t know how to do that. You’d either have to offer
cash incentives or mandate that it’s just not happening anymore.” At one point in a separate discussion, Pat candidly said that an individual would have to give up or sacrifice some level of personal freedom or choice in order to act sustainably.

I heard the most unique suggestion from Dave. I asked him the question and he immediately replied, “A school could set forth an example of sustainability by having a diversified teaching staff.” I enjoyed his answer and how sure he was, but I wasn’t completely convinced. I wanted him to explain in what way having a diversified teaching staff could exemplify sustainability to the students in the school. He said, “In this way, students are exposed to as many sides of an issue as possible. It’s going to provide a multitude of outlooks within each discipline. There will be a multitude of strategies, opinions, styles, or issues and that’s going to introduce kids to a variety of worldviews which again is closely related to sustainability.” Dave touches on the relationship between sustainability and worldview here, and I will treat that issue with it’s own section in a moment.

Adam has now taught in different schools on three continents. He has seen much to reflect on, and he had much to say about this aspect of demonstrating sustainability. First, I asked him to think back to Norway and to think about the things he saw there. He said, “In Norway, they had sensors that turned the light bulbs on and off when teachers or students entered and exited the room. There was no wasted energy.” Those types of things, though, have to be taught. Don’t they? If a student isn’t shown those things, do they notice them and learn about them. I asked Adam about his students in Thailand next, and although he teaches in a prestigious school, his students are still stricken with poverty. Adam elaborated and
said, "In some ways, their deprivation is a lesson in sustainability. My kids who
don’t have shoes on their feet or socks that cover their toes learn quite a bit about
sustainability. They learn how to save. When the tire goes flat on their motorcycle
on their way to school they fix it instead of throwing it away and getting a new one.
They learn to care for things. It’s not necessarily sustainability by choice, but by
necessity.”

I wanted him to talk more about the poverty faced by some of his students
and how he sees that as related to sustainability. He had no shortage of examples to
choose from. First, he said, “Here, students might have one pair of shoes for six
years, and when the bottom wears out you sew them back together by hand. In the
States, we would throw them away and get a new pair whether we can afford it or
not.” His students do not, or I should say his poorer students do not, have the same
quality of disposability. Those lessons in conservation continue for many on their
home farms. He said, “ As farmers, they have to consider sustainability for their
crops, the appropriate produce for each season, they collect rain water, and they get
those practical lessons at home, not in school. They use manure for fertilizer,
animals for labor and collect almost all of their own seed.” When we compared what
his students learn about sustainability at school versus at home he said, “All of the
paper we use in the copier comes from shredded and recycled paper. But my
students learn more at home. As far as learning in school and things found in the
curriculum, I’m not sure I see much.”

Although she teaches in an outdoor science school, Adriana didn’t have any
new or inventive ideas to share. One of her passions is to consider the sources and
costs of food. Because of this I think, her answers started there. She said, “Schools could compost their food waste in cafeterias. They could stress the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle. The schools could also talk more about buying locally, and purchase locally grown food for use in the cafeteria.” Being in a mountainous region of California, she didn’t see a way for them to strictly buy locally, but she got excited when considering the potential for a large school in a rural community, like State College Area High School, to do so and educate the students about the benefits of doing so. Even with passive examples surrounding you in the school, she said, “Sustainability needs to be learned. You have to provide knowledge to students because it’s not second nature for someone to live sustainably.”

What Could Be Done in Schools

In sum, thus far it seems that the participants all agree that sustainability is a good thing to have in schools, it’s an appropriate and effective place, but that it’s just not going to happen. Once more, I decided to ask the “what if?” What if they had absolute freedom to address issues of sustainability in their classes? What would they do? How would they go about incorporating it? And with English, social studies and mathematics represented as content areas among the participants, I was excited to see where this might go. Between the five of them, they had some pretty good ideas.

I had to work with Jimmy a little bit. Initially, he said, “I think it’s important for it to be in schools, but I don’t really know how I would incorporate it into English class., but I absolutely would feel comfortable doing it. I don’t know that those two
subjects fit together. In other classes I think it would work better and I think it would be a great thing to add.” We talked about this for a while and again he came back to the idea that his students, as 7th graders, were too immature to be productive. I suggested to him that he imagined he were teaching older students in a high school and asked him what he would do then. This seemed to open up new opportunities for him. He said, “If I had an older group of students, we could study persuasive arguments in English class and try to have people debate sides of an issue. That would be an interesting way to go about teaching sustainability because you could engage them on a unique concept level.” He even talked about discussing climate change as a subject matter within his material on persuasive material.

Dave’s idea was nearly identical. Rather than address sustainability through writing, however, Dave opted to use literature as the vehicle. Because he is currently working as a substitute teacher, he didn’t exactly have a class novel in mind when he answered this. Instead, he chose the last book he read, Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. It has been several years since I read that book myself, but I didn’t exactly remember sustainability being integral to the text. I was curious to see where he went with this idea. His idea was great. He said, “I just read One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, and you could take the idea of majority versus minority from the book and apply it to the corresponding views on global warming. There’s not an obvious connection in that book, but most books kids read in high school don’t have one so you have to find ways like that.” Again, much like Jimmy the idea of taking a side comes up, and in that way students in either Jimmy’s class
or in Dave’s class will hear both sides of the argument from other students and will be allowed to make a decision on their own.

When I asked Adam this question, the first thing he did was restate the importance of educating students about sustainability. To begin, he said, “It’s something the school has got to teach. Ideas aren’t sustainable if they are not taught. The environment and sustainability are like everything else; they are ideas. High schools students become aware of a million ideas a day. It’s got to be taught if it’s going to stick.” I told him that was great, but what would he specifically do in his classroom if he were going to teach it. I was especially interested in this answer because he was teaching in Thailand, and he came up with a tremendous idea, but ultimately admitted defeat because of the true nature of his job. He said, “The best way I can imagine teaching my students about sustainability is through music videos and looking at their creation, examining what it took, what was spent and what resources were used in making the music video. Unfortunately, I’m here to teach conversation. My students are to learn about how they can please tourists and that’s it. They need to learn English to bring money into the country.” Because of the nature of his teaching position, what he just described, he will not be returning to Thailand to teach for the following year.

In my conversation with Pat on this subject, we frequently found ourselves taking quick turns and exploring a variety of new directions. First, we began with what he might do in his classroom. He said, “I’d take an economic slant to it and investigate current events. I would ask questions like can we sustain the deficit that we have? What types of serious decisions are we going to have to make? Where are
we going to have to compromise if we want to sustain the society that we have?” I thought those were great essential questions for a high school unit and I asked him why he thought those things were so important. He said, “Because if we want this standard of living to continue, then we can’t keep going in the same direction we have been. We can’t have everything. If we want to maintain our position as a global power, if we want to be a leading nation, we can’t keep doing what we’re doing.” Pat teaches a couple of different classes, one of which is a cultural anthropology type of class, and without any prodding he launched into a new idea about teaching sustainability in the framework of that curriculum. He said, “I’m sure I cold also incorporate things into a culture unit and ask how do we act less sustainably than opposed to Europeans who might use more public transportation? That’s more sustainable that each one of us driving ourselves around.”

The same person who didn’t know if he even cared about sustainability is the one who came up with great ideas like this. Why is it that someone who can think this way, someone who can think in terms of the big picture and see the larger scheme, is unwilling to take the plunge and make the changes in his life necessary to promote sustainability on the planet? He even went a step further once we started discussing the different ways a teacher could potentially introduce this material. He said, “I think it could have an interesting effect of the kids if you took an aggressive type of approach, and it might actually make them start thinking a little bit. It’s certainly not something I consider myself an expert in, but it’s not something I would avoid either. I think the basic ideas of sustainability are easy to incorporate into any subject.” Again, Pat amazes me. In spite of his unwillingness to change or
even care, he wouldn’t avoid the subject in his classes, and finds it easy to incorporate. His last comment, I think further illustrates his personal paradox. He said, “It’s certainly something you can both talk about and do. You might even be doing it without knowing it. I don’t think you necessarily need to have an understanding of the concept of sustainability, because in a lot of cases it’s just common sense.”

In earlier conversations Adriana had already given me examples of how she would go about teaching sustainability in a math class. I won’t retell those results here, but we did talk about other things related to the idea. One of the things we talked about was how to get kids to buy-in enough to change the habits of their day-to-day lives, and she had no real ideas. Next I asked her about what that might do to a teacher. If, as a teacher, you are aware that there isn’t any guarantee of students buying in enough to change their practices, how do teachers preserve any sense of hope? She said, “School is a great place to learn about sustainability, and it’s absolutely appropriate to have those discussions there. I do think you would have to be satisfied with small victories when one kid recycles his glass bottle, but it’s the small things, small steps and small victories that make a big change when added up.”

We talked about how those small victories can’t be easily noticed, however, and I again asked what’s the point? She said, “It’s like in English class. Some kids might remember what a direct object is and some might not, but you still teach it. Any awareness you give to students would allow them the opportunity to alter their practices.” That was an answer I could easily identify with as an English teacher.
Why It's Not in Schools

Since almost everyone agreed that sustainability belonged in the curriculum, and that it was an effective and appropriate place, I wanted them to think about why it wasn’t. If it was so essential, why hasn’t it made the jump to full inclusion in the curriculum? Those who were most comfortable with the subject had few if any answers. When I asked Adriana why she said, “I don’t know. It doesn’t make any sense.” But it was those who were least familiar with sustainability who had ideas and reasoning for the situation.

To begin, and to restate what he said earlier, Adam said, “Sustainability isn’t taught in schools because it’s not profitable monetarily.” This is a bit in line with what Jimmy said about his school being designated a green school simply for the purposes of financial gain or a tax write off. Why sustainability? In that case, it pays. What about at the level of the individual classroom teacher? Why aren’t there more teachers putting in into their curriculum? Dave had thoughts on this. He said, “I think people could have these types of discussions in their classrooms, but teachers just don’t want to make waves.” This sounds a lot like the reasons for not putting study of place into the curriculum. Jimmy said that he couldn’t consider doing anything that deviates to far from the norm until he was given tenure. Dave’s answer speaks to that fear. What then? What happens after you get tenure as a teacher? Why not talk sustainability then? Dave had an answer for that. He said, “I think once a lot of teachers find their niche in a school or some sort of comfort level they don’t want to work any harder than they need to. They don’t want to be hassled, so they avoid controversy in the classroom.” It’s a discouraging outlook on
those in the profession, to be sure, but it is also part of what he has seen in the community schools.

Dave and I continued on the subject. I asked him to think about where education ranks relative to other professions in terms of advancing an agenda laced with sustainable ideals. He made a compelling argument in his response, but from my perspective it was equally sad. He said, “Education, as a field, could absolutely be a leader in sustainability but it is without a doubt lagging behind. School is the place to learn about the life and society that we live in. Part of our responsibility as a teacher is being responsible for the times we live in, but unfortunately students don’t seem very interested in these things.” This is the point of view of a first year teacher and someone who thinks sustainability is of the utmost importance. This does not sound very promising.

Jimmy made comments similar to Dave in that teachers do what’s comfortable. In this instance, however, Jimmy took ownership of his thoughts and actions. He said, “I feel like I have no right to say certain things. It’s true, some things are just facts and should be said in a public school. They teach students how to operate and function in the world. Schools set the kids up for certain things, but I have no right to say some things.” Again, we’re back to not rocking the boat, not making waves, and choosing status quo over change and possibility. And maybe it’s because of this fear that he said the following, “School is the perfect place to learn these things, but it’s not doing well in its current state. I know I can’t do it very well with the curriculum I’m given.” It may be the truth, but it also may be a
rationalization. It’s as if he’s saying I would if I could, but I don’t have the tools so I can’t.

In spite of his lack of familiarity with the subject, Pat had some very interesting things to say. One of the things we talked about was the idea of Jimmy’s green school, and I asked him how he thought an idea like that would be received at his school. Would it work? Would it do anything to help advance sustainability? He said, “In some ways, it seems to be fixing a problem by creating a new one. Sure we save paper, but we consume more energy plugging in all our technology. We use more resources in the creation of those technological products. So do we really save any money or doing anything more sustainably? I don’t know. Are we really being more responsible? Are we really helping kids by not using paper? I don’t know.” And his final point there is really the crux of the argument. The point of public schools is to educate kids and do so in the best way possible. What happens is one day a study is done that shows kids learn better with paper?

We continued to talk, but from this point forward he had more of a “what’s the point?” type of mentality. He said, “It seems like such a lofty ideal to have in the classroom, I don’t know that it’s worth anything.” Again, I’d like to point out that this is coming from a first year teacher who in my opinion should be full of optimism and ideals but yet he comes off like a weary veteran. True to his nature, he did leave the door open just a crack when we discussed where to go from here. He said, “I think you can get kind of jaded by the lack of hope in a lot of these situations and you start to wonder if you can even make a difference. I certainly think it’s worth
talking about.” Although he has serious concerns and reservations, he is willing to concede that it is not a lost cause.

Final Thoughts on Sustainability and Education

As in the previous two chapters, I will conclude with participants’ responses to a variation on the same question. In this instance, I asked each of the participants how student teaching overseas impacted their understanding of the relationship between sustainability and education. Although the question did not suggest (at least I don’t think it did) their responses come in the form of a comparison of sustainability in Norwegian and American schools, all of the participants gave part of their response in those terms.

Jimmy is a skeptic. He questions nearly everything before offering an opinion, and this can be a good thing. In the case of sustainability, I think his skepticism got the best of him. I don’t think he saw how it fit into the educational system. During his first year of teaching I asked him the question and he replied, “The thing that I learned is that you can incorporate a lot into your education system and your community and your culture and your values about sustainability and you can bring a lot of it together all at once. In the US, sustainability relates to keeping money flowing and keeping the school afloat”. In this response, his skepticism shows by relating sustainability to financial solvency of education, but what’s most important is his comment that if a teacher wanted to, he or she really could do a lot.

I think Pat also saw sustainability through a bit of a narrow lens, and while I don’t know that he will ever be one to intentionally incorporate sustainability into
his curriculum, he too took strides toward seeing a larger landscape. He said, "I don’t know if they did anything overtly sustainable, but I would say that they certainly felt strongly about having a relationship with their surroundings, and taking time to spend outdoors and experience those surroundings. There was a big emphasis on community building, and those feelings of community combined with knowing your surroundings lead people toward sustainable practices". I take this to be a success. True, he may not have been able to point to anything specific that was sustainable in his mind, but what he did do was see how other practices organized around understanding place and worldview could lead one to acting in a sustainable fashion. Without any prodding, Pat made the connection between all three subjects covered thus far.

What’s interesting to me is that Adam, who taught in the same school as Pat, said, “Norway did a lot of good things and they were so noticeable, but I don’t think it was really all that more sustainable than a US classroom although there was a much greater level of awareness”. Somehow the same school gave off two different impressions about what was noticeable. Adriana was a little disappointed in what she saw. She said, "I thought I would see a lot more sustainable acts in Europe. There was more than in the US, and they were more progressive in their attitudes and actions". She did, however, relate a story about a contest in her school. The local businesses sponsored a competition where teams of students combined to create and develop a new product that benefitted the people of the community and the environment. Many students developed products that focused on harnessing
renewable energy sources. I think this goes to show that perception was dependent upon the individual’s level of awareness heading into student teaching.

Without coaxing, Dave was again able to demonstrate synthesis in his response. He drew on past experiences from classes at Penn State, what he saw in Norway, and tied them to ideas surrounding place and worldview. Dave told me that, “When I went to Norway I found that it exemplified the principles of Madhu’s class, which was that teachers should be, and in Norway they are, teaching the democratic process and democratic participation. These are things where the idea is to get the student connected to the world and invested in the world and to practice sustainability. That ideal was solidified and confirmed by my experiences in Norway”. In this response we can see the obvious connection to sustainability, but being connected to the world emphasizes place, and being invested in the world speaks to the larger picture suggested in topics surrounding worldview.

Finally, Jimmy wanted to add a last word. He works in a “green school”. His disposition shows in this comment, but the manner in which it ends tells us much. He said:

“I work in a green school so we are constantly dealing with less. I only have 30 copies of my book, and we have to read in class. We often will use the internet to tell students their assignments. We’re trying to minimize consumption. It’s a middle school and a lot of the kids walk to school. But I think being a green school entitles us to some sort of tax write off. There’s got to be a monetary incentive, and I know that
the school gets local and state recognition. I guess there don’t need to be good intentions if there is a good result”.

I think from all the responses I can make a correlation connecting overseas student teaching and awareness of opportunity for including sustainability in classrooms as first year teachers. In spite of labels like “green schools”, even the participant who was most hesitant about embracing sustainability can find a positive outcome. I think this is evidence of the correlation.
Chapter 6

Overseas Student Teaching and Professional Preparation

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.

- Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*

The United States will be involved in world leadership for many years to come. The quality of that leadership will depend, in large part, upon the international/intercultural understandings of our citizens. Teachers are urgently needed who possess the qualities and expertise required to bring about the appropriate understandings in their students. The COST experience is invaluable to future teachers in this respect.

- Anderson and Self (1983)

INTRODUCTION

I begin by making the assumption that student teaching is the crown jewel of teacher preparation. It is the final practicum, and the first real test of mettle where rubber meets the road. The five participants in this research all completed their
student teaching in one of three schools in Trondheim, Norway. I interviewed each of them, asking identical questions to all, and had them reflect upon their time student teaching. With that said, I remember only a few things from my own student teaching experience.

My mentor teacher was much older than I was, and he was nearing retirement. He had been practicing and perfecting his craft for over 30 years. I figured I had much to learn. What I learned, however, was that the best way to spend your summer was to make home recordings of each of the texts I expect the students to read throughout the school year. This way, I could begin each class by playing an audio recording of the previous night’s reading assignment. The first novel I ever taught, *The Scarlett Letter*, I learned to teach this way using my mentor’s recordings...he insisted.

The only other vivid recollection of learning from my mentor consisted of him giving me one piece of advice on my last day. He told me that a teacher should never live in the same community that he or she works in. It was his belief that if my parents came to visit, and we went out to dinner, and just one student saw me having a glass of wine with dinner I would be a drunk the following day. Or, at least, that’s what the students would say, and it would spread around the school like wildfire. If I didn’t want to see students or parents every time I went to a movie, or the grocery store, or the gas station, then I positively could not live in the same community as the school.

When I first learned that the students at Penn State had the opportunity to complete their entire student teaching experience overseas, I was hooked. I wished
I had an opportunity like this instead of the one I did have, and I needed to learn more. As noted earlier, I was able to meet with student teachers while in Sweden and served as a supervisor and evaluator for the student teachers in Norway. The results presented in this chapter will try to establish the value and relevancy of an overseas student teaching experience for the five first year teachers and, where applicable, examine how well an overseas experience translates to teaching in this country. Furthermore, the first year teachers also explained how their experiences impacted their understanding of the relationship between place, worldview, sustainability and education. Before I divulge the results of my analysis, it is prudent to begin with a review of relevant literature.

**REVIEW OF OVERSEAS STUDENT TEACHING LITERATURE**

Study abroad opportunities have been available to undergraduate students for decades. One organization in particular, The Institute for International Education of Students (IES), has been integral in providing international opportunities since 1950. In a comprehensive study of participants from 1950 to 1999, the IES surveyed just over 3,400 participants of their study abroad program (23 percent response rate). The participants in the survey studied in different parts of the world for different lengths of time. This study revealed that, “studying abroad is usually a defining moment in a young person’s life and continues to impact the participant’s life for years after the experience.” (Dwyer, 2004) While this is noteworthy, it is important to note that this study did not specifically apply to those
going abroad for the purpose of student teaching. This study was limited to those involved with IES programs and did not include those who might have taken part in a program designed for teachers like the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching (COST).

The roots of COST can be traced back to the University of Alabama. Beginning in 1961, the University of Alabama began sending student teachers out of country for their student teaching practicum. Programs were available in Mexico, Columbia, and eventually expanded to Latin America. The program was so popular and successful that in 1973, The University of Alabama invited representatives from other schools across the region and state to participate in the “Conference to Explore Student Teaching Opportunities in Foreign Countries.” From this conference, Cost was born. According to an unpublished document that chronicled the history and development of COST, the students could be, “totally immersed in another culture while utilizing their training, knowledge, and proficiency” (Anderson and Self, 1983, p. 2). Furthermore, as a result of their experiences, “The student teachers also became better prepared through this multicultural exposure, to cope with racial and cultural difference in the United States schools” (p. 2). To my knowledge, there has been no comprehensive study done on the decades of COST participants. In other words, I did not find data specific to student teachers that were similar in scope to the IES project.

There was much information available regarding overseas student teaching, and there were several ways to categorize the literature I became familiar with. So that the reader is aware, the following review of literature on this topic is arranged
into three sections. They are as follows: research gathered or pertaining to pre-overseas student teaching, research gathered or pertaining to things during overseas student teaching, and research gathered or pertaining to things after overseas student teaching.

Prior to Overseas Student Teaching

Paige's (1993) book, *Education for the International Experience*, is a terrific starting point for literature on this subject. One of the main premises for the book is that “intercultural experiences are emotionally intense and profoundly challenging for the participants” (vii). I will explore later on whether or not this held true with my participants. In addition, I will also examine a second premise of the book. Paige wrote that, “Intercultural education is inherently transformative. It is preparing learners for a major transition in their lives and it is, in fact, a part of that transition” (p.18). I don't think there is any doubt regarding the transitional nature of overseas student teaching, but I will go into more depth concerning the transformative claim in my analysis of the interview transcripts.

Laura Stachowski is the Director of Cultural Immersion Projects and a faculty member in Curriculum and Instruction at Indiana University. She has collaborated with several other individuals and published a fair bit on the subject of international student teaching. Of particular note among her list of publications is her 1998 work (Stachowski and Mahan, 1998). She and her research partner start this piece noting that most people entering education as a profession are white, and this was also the case for the five students in Trondheim. As a result of this near monoculture among
young teachers, she stresses the importance of diversity training, and thus the need for cross-cultural student teaching. Such training could be had in international contexts. In addition, she stated that student teacher learning outcomes could result from educator sources within the school (a mentor teacher) or the community in which they are immersed. She said that all schools operate in a community that influences the schooling the children receive, and that student teaching is more than the traditional university/mentor/student teacher relationship.

Dr. Christina Alfaro, Professor in Cross Cultural Education at San Diego State University focused her research on this subject around the idea of globalization. Specifically, Alfaro (2008) found that international student teaching experiences help to provide a global society with educators that can meet cultural and linguistic needs in diverse societies. She argued that there is a need for globalization of teacher education programs that produce globally minded teachers in the United States. She said, “These teacher candidates thought they had knowledge regarding cultural differences, but when they lived it their knowledge actually changed” (p. 23). Toward this end, she found that international teaching experiences helped student teachers gain a better understanding of the American system of education, the relationship between education and the wider society, increased sensitivity to different worldviews and cultures, and an increased ideological clarity. Alfaro found these results manifested in the following five themes: emergence of teaching from the heart, cultural experience of difference, negotiation of difference, transformative cultural and intercultural phenomena, and multicultural inclusive pedagogy. In summary, she concluded, “The situated learning experience provided them the
opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogues and relationships with teachers
and students that would not have been necessarily the same in the United
States...the intercultural experience is the critical element in gaining a meaningful
understanding of other cultures as well as one’s own place in an interconnected
world” (p. 25).

This research provided several avenues of exploration among the five first
year teachers I interviewed. Of particular interest to me was to get at the ways in
which this international student teaching experience impacted, if at all, their
perception of being globally minded, globalized education, and cultural needs. How
would the students define those ideas, and of what importance are those ideas in
their classrooms?

Cochran-Smith (1991) wrote an article that made an appeal to reform
student teaching, and I think overseas opportunities can comprise a component of
that reform. Her primary objective, however, is creating a “collaborative resonance”
between mentor and student teacher. This might be construed as something similar
to the version of speed dating that occurs between mentors and interns in Penn
State’s Professional Development School. In other words, mentors and interns can
get a feel for one another before deciding to work with each other and hopefully
discover some common ground and interests upon which to begin building a
professional relationship. She hopes that this guiding force in the matching process
will help with intellectual and professional development, as well as spark a
commitment to reform among the young teachers. For my group of first year
teachers, there was no way for them to filter through the candidates for mentor
teachers. Results will show, however, that mentor teachers did have an impact on
the quality of preparatory experience provided in Norway.

Kenneth Cushner has been a prolific writer on the subject of international
student teaching. He was the editor of a 2007 compilation of essays that was built
around the premise of, “teacher education programs need to prepare candidates
who are not only pedagogically competent but also culturally competent” (10).
Cushner also published an article in that same year that functions as a survey of the
variety of overseas student teaching options available in today's day and age. Of
course, he makes mention of COST, and he also includes information about the
Cultural Immersion Project at Indiana University, Global Student Teaching project,
and the Pacific Region Student Teaching program. The purpose of this article is, “to
review what we know about the impact of study abroad in general and the
international student teaching experience in particular, and then to explain how
experience operates to move people to more interculturally-sensitive and
ethno-relative orientations” (p. 28). I think this theme of cultural competence is a
holdover from one of his previous works. In 1996, he authored another book that is
a collection of cross-cultural interactions. In this book, he analyzed the situations,
examined the outcomes, and produced 18 themes that provide a framework for
understanding intercultural interactions. Cultural competence and cross-cultural
interactions are two subjects about which my first year teachers answered
questions. Results will show to be mixed on this subject, with some teachers even
claiming to be culturally incompetent.
Finally, in our review of literature related to pre-overseas student teaching, Geneva Gay (2002) discussed, “the components of the preparation for and practice of culturally responsive teaching” (p. 114). In this piece, she wrote about how public school students in this country are often struggling with academic tasks while “functioning under cultural conditions unnatural to them” (p. 112). She argued that there is a need for culturally responsive teachers to be effective with these types of students. I believe that overseas student teaching works toward the accomplishment of this goal.

**During Overseas Student Teaching**

Research conducted during the actual practice of overseas student teaching proved to have the most limited literature of the three categories in this review. Firmin’s (2007a) piece about the affective responses of student teachers during their practicum is a useful work on two fronts. First, there is a clear and concise acknowledgement of imitations of the study provided at the end. In no way does it intend to serve as a blanket statement for all who participate in overseas student teaching programs. Second, this article suggested that the experience of overseas student teachers follows a bell curve consisting of three stages, excitement when entering the experience, dysphoria during (which is to say confusion about not only the cultural shock but the professional demands of teaching as well), and ended on a positive emotional level resulting in a superior developmental experience.
Furthering the discussion on professional development, Baker (2000) conducted interviews with student teachers and made findings in a more specific area of growth. This research made the assertion that there was exceptional potential for international student teaching programs to prepare student teachers for work in multi-cultural, ELL classrooms in this country. He said, “many new teachers have the opportunity to teach their academic disciplines in English at secondary schools of a non-English-speaking country...in the process, these teachers develop their own abilities to design academic instruction in English so that English learners can understand, interact and use literacy skills effectively” (p. 6-7). Later results will discuss the ability of the participants in dealing with English Language Learners in the United States. Extending that thought, I will also explore the student’s ability to recognize an increased potential to successfully navigate multicultural classrooms.

Mehmet Sahin (2008) took a slightly different approach to his research in this arena. His study was unique in that it studied Turkish students teaching in the United States, and his results were reported from the Turkish students. His research found that cultural transmission does not occur in only one direction. He concluded that personal and professional benefits result from a cross-cultural experience and that these experiences result in increased cultural awareness. The research also showed that United States students benefitted from their overseas instructors in that they gained a better understanding of other countries and cultures. One of the Turkish student teachers in Sahin’s (2008) study said, “many people that I talked to did not know very much about our culture. I think we were
kind of like a bridge between two cultures” (p. 1785). The American mentor teacher also discussed this idea of mutual cultural exchange and said, “We have tried to open their (the students’) world to other cultures, but nothing can compare to having representatives from other parts of the world with them for several weeks” (p. 1785). Sahin concluded that the benefit is mutually shared between the student teacher and the public school student. In response to this research, I decided to have the participants in my study think about what their Norwegian host community learned about America and American culture from them.

Thinking back to the dysphoria described by Firmin (2007a), Clement (2002) described the feelings of overseas student teachers that experienced this unsettled dysphoria and found that professors who supervised overseas student teaching played a pivotal role in the overall success of the experience. Because a professor or instructor could not be with the student teacher for the duration of the term, only for a short period of observation, email became essential for communication between student teachers and their instructors. The student teachers, who had grown to depend upon their instructors over the course of their academic career, relied on this contact as they faced unforeseen challenges, completed assignments, and sought advice.

Marilyn Cochran-Smith (1991b) wrote more after her previous article regarding mentor and intern selection. In this article, she talked about the results of such a placement during the experience. She described the active process of student teachers learning to be change agents in public education by being placed with those veteran mentor teachers who are working to be reformers within their own schools,
classrooms and communities. I believe that this same outcome can be accomplished via international student teaching if the appropriate mentor and intern pairing is achieved.

Finally, in the review of literature that discussed information obtained during the process of student teaching, Quezada (2007) analyzed reflections of accounts of student teachers while abroad. The end analysis yielded four results: perceived inequities, described as, “the participants abilities to reflect on inequities that affect children on both sides of the borders due to language, national origin, skin color or SES” (p. 101), teacher as change agent, described as, “challenges encountered and the possibility that they have the power to be change agents in their own classrooms through their personal commitments” (p. 103), student intimacy and significance, described as, "the impact the children and their community had on the student teachers and the strong relationships and connections forged between them that has made significance in their lives as professionals and assisted in developing ideological clarity" (p. 104), and external versus internal pressures, described as, “the pressure felt by bi-literacy teachers in their current teaching positions regarding a standard based curriculum and the mismatch for their English language learners” (p. 108). These four themes will prove to show themselves again in my analysis of my participant’s experiences as first year teachers.
After Overseas Student Teaching

As more and more students choose to participate in overseas student teaching programs, we have become more aware of the outcomes from such an experience and particularly what it means for the future careers of these students. While there were no significant studies investigating the impact of overseas student teaching over time, five years after this type of experience for example, the following research sheds light on the more immediate impact this type of experience has on young teachers.

Brislin’s (1981) book, Cross-Cultural Encounters, stated early on that the goal of the book is to, “document the commonalities of across people’s various cross-cultural experiences” (ix). This work contributes to furthering collections of these types of experiences and adds to the pool of knowledge from which other professionals can draw. The major assumption of the book is “research findings and the wisdom of accumulated experience from one type of inter-group contact can be helpful in analyzing others” (2). This is the goal that I had in mind as I produced the work here. It is my hope that, in some small way, this work contributes to the volume of research completed on overseas student teaching.

In perhaps the most comprehensive and ambitious study on the subject of overseas student teaching, Cushner and Mahon (2002) conducted a study among 50 overseas student teachers. The results reflected what is typically found, that is to say outcomes, as reported by the student teachers. Student teachers reported an impact both on the personal and professional planes of learning and development. Specific examples within these two planes of experience include impacts on beliefs
about self and others. This included acceptance and tolerance, commonalities and differences, and impacts on professional development in helping the student teachers to be more globally minded. Cushner and Mahon said, “Specifically, as people’s ability to understand difference increases, so does their ability to negotiate a variety of worldviews” (p. 50). The student teachers quoted expressed a desire to educate future students so that they might be less ethnocentric, and more globally aware. Reported changes in the personal plane included shifts in point of view, perception, and perspective. The authors claimed that, “the overseas student teaching experience represents the first time they have to rely solely on themselves...in that space, they report the growth of self-confidence and esteem, increased adaptability, resourcefulness and persistence” (p. 51). These findings were echoed in the interviews of Penn State’s first year teachers.

In more recent research, Stachowski, Bodle and Morrin (2008) concluded that overseas student teaching helped student teachers in three domains of professional development. The first domain suggested that international student teaching allowed the novice teachers to further understand others in the world. The second was in recognizing how they (the native teachers) live and educate those children within existing cultural ideologies. The third was meeting the needs of the students by understanding the dynamics of the community. The researchers argued that this information is vital for all successful classroom teachers, as these three domains of professional development contributed to a broader worldview and informed classroom practice. Because of this, the researchers suggested that
personal and professional growth in an overseas setting is greater than in traditional settings.

Purdy and Gibson (2008) examined alternative student teaching placement for Irish student teachers and found that students participating in this kind of experience were met with higher employability rates than those who participated in traditional student teaching placements. While employability was the focus of this study, the researchers also reported several other encouraging outcomes. Among those reported were a high percentage of student teachers ranking the experience as very positive, a tremendous opportunity for networking in educational field, and enhanced personal intellectual skills that were not limited to the profession but transferrable to other areas of life. Purdy and Gibson (2008) also found that these alternative placements forced student teachers to explore alternate platforms from which to teach and encouraged a greater volume of self-reflection. Following up on previous work in the field, Purdy and Gibson corroborated previous reports that communication with the host university could have been better. This is identical to conclusions of similar programs with South Korean (Lee, 2005) and South African (Penny and Harley, 1995) student teachers, although all three of these studies share a unique quality not found in the program offered to Penn State student teachers. In the case of the Irish, South African and South Korean studies, those students were placed in dicey cultural environments. The Irish students were placed in Belfast. The white, South African students were in one of the poorest areas of the formerly apartheid-ruled nation, and the Korean students were placed in Japanese schools. The Penn State students were not faced with these types of cultural or racial
challenges, but the disappointment in perceived communication between host, sponsor and student teacher were similar in that the students felt culturally unprepared.

As noted, this study emphasized the importance of employability, and found that these alternative placements gave novice teachers a leg up on the competition in the applicant pool. The researchers drew the conclusion that alternative placements better prepared student teachers for the diverse community both in the profession and in the classroom children they would someday be teaching. With this research in mind, I thought it important and valuable to gauge the thoughts of the participants regarding employability.

Firmin (2007b) conducted research and identified three intrinsic factors that were found to have the greatest impact on their experiences. The first factor was their predisposition to cultural differences (adapting to academic cultural differences in expectations for achievement, behavior, etc. how do you provide for students under these new cultural guidelines?). This could more easily be characterized as their level of tolerance and adaptation to those differences. Firmin (2007b) said, “Students not only encountered the need to adapt, but also to integrate these cultural aspects into their classrooms” (p. 142). In one instance a student teacher found herself struggling to deal with critiquing Korean student work when the culture appeared so non-confrontational. The second intrinsic factor found to have a significant impact was the student’s ability to fit in (the students ability over time to gain acceptance into the host culture). Firmin (2007b) described the student teachers in the study as, “possessing both shared qualities and
distinct characteristics with the nationals among whom they lived” (p. 144). In other words, how well were the students able to become a part of, or immerse themselves in, the new culture? Finally, the third intrinsic factor was determined to be the student’s ability to navigate a foreign, professional environment without social support systems in place (distal and proximal support). A student’s skill in creating new support systems away from the comforts of friends and family proved to be crucial in having positive experiences. Firmin said, “while they worked to develop relationships with the people around them, communication with acquaintances and family back home remained a key factor in their social support” and that aided in “developing social support locally” (p. 144).

I located one piece of research, Tang (2004), which took student suggestions for improving one particular international student program. The students in this study received all of the previously mentioned benefits of an international student teaching experience (development in personal and intercultural competence in cross cultural experiences, developed their professional competence, etc.), but Tang did go one step further than other researchers and sought ideas for making such a program even stronger. With thoughts of strengthening the international student teaching options at Penn State, I would make sure to ask the first year teachers to reflect upon their experiences and ask for their suggestions to make the program even stronger.

Bryan’s (1997) work from the late 1990’s found that there are three pillars that form the shape of the student teacher growth and development process. They included: instructional pedagogy, learning about oneself and appreciation and
understanding of multiculturalism. Just over a decade later, DeVillar (2009) studied the three pillars of the Bryan research among student teachers in Belize, China and Mexico. DeVillar studied similarities and differences among these three areas. Similarities were that they all taught in English, all three placements were significantly different from their home environment, and that they all spent the same length of time student teaching, 12 weeks. The differences were many but, “Preliminary findings include that student teaching abroad can serve as a step in helping institutions of higher education develop teachers embody the three values (of Bryan) and enabling schools to reap the benefits derived from the cadre of culturally responsive educators. Additionally, international contexts having similar multicultural settings to those found within U.S. public schools may be more conducive to the student teachers’ learning and future practice as a teacher within the U.S. public school setting” (165).

Roane (2008) studied 15 student teachers who were in South America for their practicum. Roane’s results showed that efficacy as a cultural learner coincided with efficacy as a teacher. In other words, the more comfortable the individual felt about himself in the foreign context, the more comfortable that individual felt as an educator. This was not entirely surprising. Roane’s data also showed that of the 15 participants in his study, only two pursued international careers, and none began teaching immediately after graduation.

Quezada (2004) offers readers a fine summary of the lessons learned abroad. He also includes a minimal literature review of student teaching abroad. The conclusions of his research are summed up in the following:
“As a result of participation in international student teaching, university students grew personally and professionally from their experiences. They became more sensitive to issues of multiculturalism. They showed an increase in self-efficacy as they learned more about themselves, the international communities in which they lived and the children they worked with. They moved beyond educational tourism” (p. 464).

This literature is wide and varied, but there are some commonalities worth discussing before getting into the responses of the five participants. First, all of the research works together to create a mosaic on the subject of international student teaching. What I mean to point out is that there exists a tremendous breadth of content. While that does indeed help add to the understanding of the topic, there seems to be a lack of depth among research participants. This is where I hope my research can fill a need. I believe that this work represents a deep and detailed look, as opposed to a surface look that focuses on outcomes, at how overseas student teaching impacts first year teachers. The second of commonality refers to those outcomes. The reported outcomes seem to come from a period of time after undergraduate work, but before work as a professional educator. This is also where my work differs and can enhance understanding of the subject.

A third theme includes ideas about English Language Learners (ELL’s) in this country. In reviewing the literature, I sensed two things. One is that many of the reports on international student teaching were conducted with student teachers who completed their task in a country where Spanish was the primary language. I
believe this leads to another assumption by the authors that student teachers will return to the United States to teach in (perhaps) urban areas where there is potentially a high percentage of ELL’s and Spanish speaking students. In my research, the language spoken overseas is not common in the United States, but we will see that there was a benefit to handling ELL’s in the classroom as a first year teacher. Furthermore, in my research, one of the five participants was in what I would call a non-traditional school, and a second continued to teach overseas. This again is where my work adds to the understanding.

Finally, there was no mention in any of the research about current practice. That is to say that none of the participants discussed how a skill or an experience gained overseas has manifested itself in current practice. This, too, is where I hope my work aids in understanding. Throughout the bulk of this work so far, I have reported participant responses to questions that asked students to reflect back on their time in Norway. It is my belief that what I have shown to this point connects to the literature presented above. I think they show personal and professional growth in their responses. I think they show a deeper understanding of cultural differences as well as a greater acceptance of differences. They have all told stories, in one way or another, about being able to more fully meet the needs of a diverse student population as a direct result of their experiences overseas. This work then carries forward to the next step.

After graduation, the next step is securing employment as a paid educator in the role of a first year teacher. As noted earlier in great detail, each participant did so in his or her own way. Among the group there is a full-time substitute, an
overseas educator, a teacher at an outdoor science school, and two teachers at traditional schools in suburban areas of large metropolitan areas. Again, I think this adds to the depth of the understanding gained in this work. There is a breadth, to be sure, but each first year teacher’s experience was explored in great detail. The bulk of the questions formulated for this interview on teacher preparation were created with these thoughts in mind. Is the current literature on the subject relevant to first year teachers or is it specific to student teaching? Thus, in moving forward from that gray space between graduation and employment, I asked for specific examples from current practice in regard to the following ideas: How did they grow professionally? How did they see issues of multiculturalism? How do they see themselves as teachers in their communities and in the world? And how is their current practice impacted by their experiences had overseas?

**WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS SAID**

The questions on this subject were based on the literature reviewed previously. All first year teachers answered these same questions, and their responses yielded similar responses across the board. Again, there was so much information to process and try to make sense of that I have decided to group my analysis of responses in a particular way. There are undoubtedly countless other ways to categorize this information that would allow for different conclusions. This is the way that made sense to me. I will be considering one question at a time and examining the responses of the participants.
The first experience all of these teachers faced upon graduation was successfully gaining employment. Purdy (2008) wrote that those with international student teaching experience had advantages over those who taught domestically, and I wondered if the same was true for these teachers. Before I divulge results, I will say that Dave did not apply for any permanent teaching positions. It was his opinion that he would rather substitute teach for a period of time that would allow him to see many schools in many districts before making decisions on where to apply. As a result, Dave was a substitute teacher in two districts and according to Dave, “They’ll take any warm body for subbing. I didn’t really have to apply or go through any sort of interview process.”

The other four teachers did apply for various permanent teaching positions, and all agreed that overseas student teaching was the keystone to landing their jobs. Adriana felt it gave her an advantage from the onset and helped her get through the first round of cuts. She said, “it was a unique experience on my resume that gave me a one-up when applying.” It does seem that High Trails rewards these types of experiences as she has mentioned that some other teachers at her school have international experience as well.

Adam felt that his position in Thailand required certain traits that can only be had through overseas experiences. Regarding his job search he said, “It helped because it showed something different. It showed that I had certain characteristics like patience that are essential for positions overseas.” Considering that Adam is the only one of the five who continued to teach overseas, his perspective on this carries a high degree of validity.
Jimmy and Pat are the two participants who are permanently employed in what might be called traditional schools. Their schools are in well-to-do communities, and positions like theirs are highly sought after with a generally large number of applicants. Pat’s response was simple and straightforward. He said, “I think it got me the job.” It is his belief that there were more experienced and more qualified people who applied, and his experience in Norway is the one thing that separated him from the rest. The circumstances surrounding Jimmy’s employment are similar. When asked about his job search and how it was affected by his overseas teaching, he said, “This was the only interview I had and I got this job. My time in Norway was the thing they had the most interest in.” In all cases, or at least in the cases presented, it seems that these experiences confirm the work of Purdy (2008). Overseas student teaching does, in fact, seem to help in the job search of recent graduates.

Because the focus of this chapter is intended to be the ways in which the overseas experience prepared the participants for their first year of teaching, the next section of analysis will focus on those preparatory types of questions. Other responses from this round of interviews were noted when and if they were placed in previous chapters. Having explored the impact of overseas student teaching on the job search, the next areas to examine will include preparation to teach to standards, educate a diverse population, to be flexible and adaptable, and the perceived differences between student teaching overseas and student teaching domestically.

Although the only experience had by each of the five participants was overseas student teaching, they all had friends in student teaching. Most of those
friends were not student teaching abroad. I asked the participants if they feel like they learned the same things as those who student taught domestically. In other words, did they feel like the preparation was equal?

Generally speaking, the participants felt like it was an excellent preparatory opportunity. When asked if he felt like he learned the same things Dave said, “Yes, but I think I got that and more. I learned how to get more variety. If only for the experience of teaching a multitude of different students and different people in a different setting...because of teaching abroad I’m going to be valuable as a teacher.” Adam felt that he learned the same things and attributed part of that to his mentor teacher. In his answer he mentioned that he didn’t feel student teaching abroad was as intense as teaching domestically because of the smaller volume of classes taught. He said, “Yes, I had a great mentor and the intensity of planning there would be comparable I think.”

Adriana was positive about her experience, but she did express some concern over things she might not have done that her peers who student taught domestically did. Her response to the question was, “I learned maybe 75% of the same things, the only thing I probably missed out on was the things that would make the behind the scenes part of teaching a little bit easier. I missed out on things like grading and spreadsheets.” Grading and clerical tasks seem to recur as items for which these first year teachers felt ill prepared for. Those types of answers have been seen before. Pat talked about being initially confused concerning grading his students in his current position too, but in all he felt that he learned similar skills in his teacher preparation. He said, “Yes, I think so. You are still teaching, you are still
developing your way of doing things you are developing your style and I think that’s the biggest reason you do student teaching. I had to create lesson plans on WWII from scratch, so I think I was left more on my own that a typical student teacher. And that taught me to be more flexible and resourceful. It pushed me to go beyond what was typical.” In that way, it seems like Pat thinks he learned more.

Jimmy took notice of the lack of grading and clerical experience too. In the end, however, he brushes those concerns aside because the rest of the experience was about teaching. When asked if he thought he learned the same things, Jimmy said, “No. But I think what I learned was better. Had I stayed here, I don’t feel like I would have been in a school that really encouraged me to try and think outside of the box like I did in Norway. Had I student taught here I feel like I would have learned a skill set that amounts to grading and creating lesson plans and working within curriculums, and frankly stuff that has little to do with teaching. Norway doesn’t provide that. Norway gives you a lot of chances to say I’m going to think outside of the box, I’m going to be really creative with my lessons to engage people and that was something I got to do in every class.”

In a related vein of questioning, during the interview I asked four of the participants to talk about just how different it was teaching in Norway compared to teaching here. I opted not to ask Adam this question, because he is still teaching overseas. In hindsight, he could have answered the question based upon his pre-service teaching. These results were split down the middle.

Two of the participants said it was virtually identical. Adriana said, “I don’t think it’s that much different, to be honest I was surprised to find it so similar.” Pat
concurred. He even made mention of his teaching style in his response when he said, “Not entirely different at all. Not all that much different. I taught the same way over there that I do here.” What follows is worth taking special note of. The two who thought is was different said so not because of the actual act of teaching, but rather they focused their responses on the environment in which they taught. Dave said, “It was a lot different. There was more freedom. It was less restrictive. People trusted that you were capable of doing what you were trained to do.” Jimmy echoed those thoughts saying, “There is just a lot more trust in both the teachers as professionals and in the education system. There’s a lack of trust here (in the United States). People don’t trust what’s going on here.” Again, the difference is not the act of teaching itself, but the conditions under which an individual performs their professional duties that make those duties so different.

While thinking about the similarities or differences of teaching in the two distinct locations, I followed up with a more pointed question. I asked the participants how well they felt they were prepared to address the content standards in this country. The jury was split. Adriana admitted to not learning the content standards, yet in spite of that deficiency, she saw a positive outcome from her experience that she related to the standards. She said, “I learned new ways to be creative, so in spite of not learning American standards in Norway, I learned things that will make it easy for me to teach to those standards when I have to.” Presently, she has to teach California content standards in science and feels quite comfortable doing so. Adam, who is teaching in Thailand had difficulty answering honestly as he has yet to experience teaching in this country. Adam said, “I don’t know because I
haven’t taught in the US yet, but yes I think it prepared me to teach (to the standards) there, absolutely.”

The remaining three participants believed the overseas student teaching experience to be deficient in this one area. First, Jimmy succinctly said, “Norway didn’t really prepare me for the content standards.” And Pat replied in an almost identical fashion when he said, “That is definitely one element of the experience where I was not prepared at all. I don’t feel I was as prepared as I should have been.” Dave took a different tactic to responding to this question, and did what I call riding the fence. He walked down the middle. When Dave was asked in student teaching in Norway prepared him to teach content standards in this country he said, “Yes and no. Teaching in Norway did not prepare me to teach American scholastic expectations. Teaching in Norway taught me that there is a responsibility to circumvent the stagnant nature of schooling. I learned that you can still teach to a test and not make it boring. So, did it prepare me to teach for standardization of what is becoming standardized education in the US? No. Not at all, but it did give me life lessons, it gave me new experiences to say that I can be adaptable and I can teach to standards and make it interesting. Yes it prepared me to be an effective teacher here.” So while he admitted that he was not prepared to teach to the standards, he learned skills that will serve him well when the time comes and he is asked to do so. In that regard, if we put his politics aside, it is similar to what Adriana said.

Four of the five participants grew up in areas they described as not being very diverse. The one exception being Jimmy, who grew up the son of an officer in
the military. One facet of education facing teachers today is being prepared to educate a diverse population in their classrooms. I asked the participants if they felt prepared to educate a diverse population. In truth, I didn’t notice a great deal of ethnic diversity during my time in Norway. I wondered how they would respond. Again, I did not ask one of the participants this question. Because Dave is a substitute and he sees different students and schools nearly every day, I thought he might lack the experiences to answer this question. Hindsight reveals that he would have been the perfect candidate to answer this question.

Among those that did respond, the comments were all lined up in a row. Their time student teaching overseas prepared them well for educating whatever level of diversity is currently in their classroom. Adriana, who deals with a new crop of students each week at her outdoor school in California, said that teaching in Norway, “broadened my ability to do so. It was an experience in adaptation and teaching to my students and providing for their needs.” Speaking of needs, Pat replied in a similar fashion when he said, “It gave me great experience working with students who have limited English proficiency. At my school now, I have such a range of abilities and I can meet all those needs. I felt more prepared coming from Norway.”

Jimmy applied a specific teaching skill to his ability to cope with learner diversity in his classroom. His thought was, “: It helped me a lot with learning differentiation skills. I learned how to break things down and break things up into ability levels.” Finally, Adam gave his highest praise to the overseas program in the regard to addressing diversity in this classroom. Adam said, “That is one of the
shining things I will take away from Norway. I learned many new techniques that helped people learn in my class so I could work with everyone.”

Often times, and I’m speaking from personal experience, the plans set forth by a teacher have to be changed or amended quickly for a variety of reasons. Technology may fail, certain students may not be present, or the message might get lost. Any of these are reasons a teacher might have to change plans quickly. I asked the participants if they thought that their time in Norway prepared them to be flexible and adaptable in the classroom. Adriana, preparing to be a secondary Math teacher, found herself teaching one English (as a foreign language) class in Norway. This, teaching a class outside of her area of expertise, went a long way in preparing her to be a flexible teacher. She said, “That was an important experience for me to have to practice adapting and changing.”

As a substitute teacher Dave is in a bit of a different situation than the rest of the participants. I asked him this question not knowing what I would get, and as it turned out, the lessons he learned even prepared him well for the life of a substitute. Dave suggested, “having a more relaxed structure and the luxury to teach the way I wanted to...it gave me a lot of freedom to be flexible and adapt to changing needs...I think it prepared me pretty well in that way. I have to adapt and learn strategies for managing things effectively as a substitute. I learned those skills in Norway.”

Finally, the three remaining participants all put their responses, in one way or another, in terms of their learned flexibility helping to meet specific student needs. Adam went through a period of trial and error in Thailand before finding strategies that worked for him and his students. He said, “Yes I definitely had to be
flexible with my material and cater it to things that the students had an interest in.” Pat also addressed the subject in a very direct manner when said, “It taught me to be flexible in regard to dealing with a huge variety in learning styles and ability, it helped me adapt to the needs of my students.” And last, Jimmy said, “Very much, I am willing to change plans on the fly in order to effectively work with people and achieve the highest quality product for everyone in the classroom.”

The teacher preparation offered by any university is not limited to it’s opportunities to student teach. There are many credit hours required for the major and more for a license in the state. All of these participants took courses in the university’s College of Education as part of their teacher preparation, and so I asked them all how well they felt those courses prepared them for their current teaching positions. The responses were mixed. Adriana, who is a licensed secondary mathematics teacher, said, “I wanted more math. I still haven’t taken a geometry class since high school. I took a course where we learned about how people think about geometry, but we didn’t learn the subject itself.”

There was one area where most students felt shortchanged. As they described it, they felt their coursework left them poorly prepared for the nuts and bolts of teaching. As examples, Jimmy said, “I needed a class on grading. There needed to be a lot more classes on the cookie-cutter necessities of skills for teaching and less of the idealistic possibilities.” Pat offered the roughest review of the program and said, “I was not pleased. It gave me very few practical skills. I feel like my content classes were great in history, but classes in the education department were not up to par. The things that helped me the most were the ones that got me
up and in front of a live class of kids, and that didn’t happen until my senior year. In my education classes, we talked about the most obscure things that I can say as a teacher have ne bearing whatsoever on what goes on in the classroom.” Speaking of what goes on in the classroom, Adam wished that more time were spent in an actual classroom. As it stands, these teachers may not have been in a classroom prior to their senior year. In my teacher preparation program, we had observation hours assigned to every class such that even when I took courses like Educational Psychology or Education and The State, I had to be in a classroom. Adam expressed a desire for a program more like mine. As for his courses, he said, “I think they’re overrated. I think the education courses did not help me a whole lot.”

However, as an example of something that went right, two of the participants mentioned the same course as instrumental in their development. Surprisingly, the course was not in the department of Curriculum and Instruction, Language and Literacy Education, Social Studies Education or Mathematics Education. The courses mentioned twice were in the Education Theory and Policy department. Adriana said that this class, “was more important than learning how to write clear objectives. Dave also mentioned this class but focused his comments elsewhere. He said, “It was not until I got into the classroom that I really learned how to be a teacher. I think there needs to be improved communication between student/professor/goals of the program/department heads and on up. The classes themselves were pretty good. Some things were not as effective as they could have been, but I remind myself that those things are going to exist everywhere.”
Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

On the whole, I believe this group tremendously benefitted from their experiences overseas. It provided them with a unique student teaching experience that helped to set them apart from other job applicants. It exposed them to alternatives and possibilities in education. Whether or not they saw any merit in these alternatives, as it relates to current classroom practice, varies from participant to participant. Additionally, they examined their individual paradigms within the three domains and reported change. I also feel comfortable saying that they each took valuable lessons – ones that might not have been had in a domestic setting for student teaching - from the experience, regardless of the degree to which they enjoyed the experience. Finally, I believe that this experience overseas effectively prepared each one of them for the jobs they ultimately earned as first year teachers.

A Final Look Back

“Place constitutes community” (Sachs, 1992, p. 31). In my mind, this sentiment is the hallmark of education that includes place as a topic of study. If we recall the story of the school that hosted a weekend 20 kilometer, round trip, ski outing to a hut, we can see this ideal in action. Parents, teachers, students and family members alike all joined in on this occasion to spend time together in a way
appropriate (appropriate according to the likes of Berry) to their place. And on this occasion, they not only are celebrating their place, but they are coming together as a community of people who share a passion for, among other things, the education of their children. With this as the background for our final discussion, it is time to consider how this notion of place ultimately worked out for the first year teachers.

Obviously, some were in better position than others to teach about place. For example, Adriana is encouraged to teach about place, because it is the nature of her school. And in doing so, one of the techniques she uses is an activity called “Tribe”. In this activity, children of different backgrounds, from different schools, and some who speak different languages, learn new facts about each other every night for the purpose of finding similarities among seemingly different people and creating community. This is an ideal situation. Dave’s position, that of a full time substitute teacher, is quite the opposite.

Daily, Dave walks into new situations and is expected to effectively deliver a curriculum prescribed by the absent teacher. Such is the life of a sub. And because of this, Dave said he sees very little opportunity to teach about place. He walks into classrooms where communities and cultures are already established. He sees it as his job to recognize those communities, quickly learn the social practices of those communities, and work within them to deliver the content. He will, whenever the opportunity presents itself, take the opportunity to relate a local issue of place to the content at hand, but there are times when it simply isn’t possible.

Adam is in a unique position when it comes to the idea of place and education. Throughout the duration of my time with him, and in all of our
interviews, it became clear to me that he is an insatiably curious person. He has a love of learning that extends to learning languages, cultures and people. In many ways, he is a student of place. This characteristic, while noble, has not yet served him as a first year teacher. Because the majority of his teaching experience has been overseas, he has not been aware of enough local knowledge to present it as part of his lessons. He was an outsider in each of those two communities. Someday, he said he hopes to change that, but as long as he continues teaching overseas he will always face this struggle. As of the time of this writing, Adam was being considered for teaching positions nearer his home in the United States. With both Dave and Adam, it could potentially be worth future study to examine how they both work to include place in more traditional settings.

Jimmy and Pat both worked this past year in traditional settings. Jimmy was west of Boston, and Pat was north of Philadelphia. There were high expectations for students in both schools, and a strong majority of their students came from families where the children were well provided for. Both recognized that Boston and Philadelphia were cities rich in history and that there were likely plenty of opportunities to include place in their classrooms. However, they both suggested that they didn't know enough about the unique characteristics of the locality to include it as part of their material. Although I mentioned that they might see this as an opportunity to let their students teach them about place, they were still hesitant claiming that as first year teachers they didn't yet feel comfortable stepping out of their box. Furthermore, they were unsure of how such material would be received
by their respective administrations. In interviews, neither of these first year teachers felt a strong sense of community.

Each of the first year teachers said that they noticed ways that place was part of the education in Norway and the strong sense of community that existed there. Because of this, each participant said that they all have moved the idea of place to a more prominent position in their paradigms. They claimed to see benefits in areas like relevant content and creating community. But as we have seen, for a variety of reasons, they have not transferred that into their classroom practices.

Putting a high value on things like place and community are examples of what might constitute one’s worldview. To refresh our memories, the simplest explanation of worldview was, “Worldview is the fundamental perspective from which one addresses every issue of life” (Sire, 2002, p. 24). And I think it is important to consider that experience shapes perspective. Given that these first year teachers all shared a Norwegian student teaching experience where they all claimed to witness place as a component of education, how would this impact their ability or decision to include worldview as a topic of study in their classrooms?

Although each of the participants considered themselves to be aware of global situations, none of them had any experience traveling internationally. To paraphrase Pat, he thought it was as if they all had a theoretical knowledge of worldview but lacked practical experience and application. Their time overseas gave them all a firsthand perspective. During my visit, I recall thinking that issues considered to be taboo in the United States (sexuality, racism, etc.) were discussed
with more freedom and openness in Norway. I wondered if the participants would try to include similar things in their own classes.

In this realm, we can begin to look back with any one of the five participants as they all suffered a similar fate. Beginning with Adam, although he said that his experience has helped him to become more aware of difference and is now more curious than ever to explore different places, he was not able to incorporate worldview into his classes primarily due to difficulties in translation. Sometimes, discussing worldview can require a language that is beyond the capabilities of someone learning English as a foreign language. Ever flexible, Adam did try, at times, to teach his students about American values and worldviews through pictures. According to him, however, his students showed little interest unless there was a female in the picture. So in some ways, Adam’s place and community was his handicap when it came to addressing worldview.

Adriana, was also handicapped but in a different way. Her programming is determined by each school’s request. A school might, for example, request that High Trails focus it’s programming on water conservation. I realize that this, in and of itself, is a worldview, but often worldview is not a direct part of the requested program, and she is left to “force” the issue when she sees an opportunity. Because of this, it appears infrequently. When it does, it appears outside of scheduled time. I will ask you to recall the story of her bunk house with American, Japanese and Armenian students discussing the different ways to say “good night”. This opened the students up to alternative worldviews as well as created opportunity to develop
community in that place. But, she said, this was rare, and more often than not worldview was not discussed.

Dave’s handicap was again the nature of his position. He may only see students for one period of one day, and during that one period he is entrusted to carry out the biddings of the regular teacher. He has very little leeway to include discussions of worldview, but when the door opens a crack he seizes the opportunity to throw it wide open. Because he is generally thrown into the middle of a unit or novel, and because he is generally unaware of what has been covered up until this point, Dave relies on his experiences from Norway to include talk about diversity and acceptance within the context of the subject at hand. Like Adam, although his position is somewhat prohibitive of worldview, he does his best.

Pat and Jimmy’s efforts to include worldview suffer similar fates as their efforts to include place. In Jimmy’s case, this time it is also partly due to his perception of his students as too young or too immature to have a legitimate discussion. I think this is a weak argument, and over time I hope that Jimmy develops strategies that enable him to engage with his students on this topic, but I am not convinced that Jimmy wants to stay with this age group. In Pat’s case it goes back to fear. Again, there is a fear of not knowing enough, not being able to look like the expert, and a fear of what the administration would think. This time there is an added element, and it seems like his fear is in revealing too much about himself and finding himself at odds with the generally accepted paradigm of his community and his place. They both considered worldview to be a controversial topic in the classroom and Pat and Jimmy feared losing their jobs if they appeared too
controversial in the classroom. All of the participants noted that in Norway, controversy was seen as a good way to keep the students involved.

Having established a connection between place and worldview, it is not difficult to extend those theories to sustainability. Again, I will rely on the school ski trip as the example. If we value our place enough to come together as a community for an event like this, we are demonstrating specific aspects of our worldview. And if our worldview dictates that these things are important, we may wish to allow for future generations having similar opportunities. In an effort to do so, we might think that sustainability is an essential part of how we live our lives. In this instance, it is not necessary to look any further than Orr’s (1992) assertion that, “All education is environmental” (p. 91). When teachers allow students to explore place and community in an effort to define or expand worldview, a sustainable approach to environmental issues is, I think, inevitable.

My experiences in two Scandinavian school systems led me to re-think the way sustainability can play a role in education both actively and passively. I began this project hoping to understand if the participants noticed this same connection between sustainability and education, and if that would impact the inclusion of the subject in their classrooms as first year teachers. The only generalization I feel comfortable making with this group is that sustainability emerged from the background of their cognitive schemas and re-positioned itself in a more noticeable location. This did not, however, manifest itself in classroom presentation. That is, of course, excluding the experience of Adriana who taught in an outdoor science school where sustainability was more often than not a core principle in the curriculum.
The other four participants all considered sustainability on a regular basis, but only in the context of their personal lives. It did not transfer to their classrooms.

This failure to transfer resulted for different reasons. In Adam's case, the lack of proficiency in English was one major prohibiting factor. Another factor was its lack of connection (in the eyes of his students) to monetary gain. In the eyes of his students, the driving force behind learning English was for the purpose of earning money through tourism. Adam did say that he recognized the unique characteristics of the place he was teaching and wished he could include a message of sustainability via conservation in his lessons. The pristine environment was why many of the tourists came to the region. The connection between place, worldview, tourism and sustainability was lost, due in large part to the language barrier, on his students.

In Dave's case, it was again because of his position as a substitute teacher that he did not include sustainability as part of his classroom paradigm. He was limited by the plans given to him from the regular teacher. In other words, his rationale for including lessons on sustainability were identical to those listed above for worldview. Jimmy and Pat, who teach in more traditional schools, did not include sustainability because of what I would consider to be fear. They feared being different, rocking the boat, or being controversial, and they believed those characteristics to be detrimental to having their contracts renewed for the following year. In short, although their experiences did bring sustainability more to the fore of their individual paradigms, it not reveal itself in the day to day procedures within the classroom setting.
The key component of overseas student teaching literature that ties all of these domains together was expressed by Cushner and Mahon (2002) when they said, “Specifically, as people’s ability to understand difference increases, so does their ability to negotiate a variety of worldviews” (p. 50). I believe that through going overseas these students were exposed to differences in perception of place, differences in worldviews, and differences in approaches to sustainability. In this specific case, the context of student teaching in Trondheim provided each of the first year teachers in this study an opportunity to explore all three domains in their classrooms overseas and to transfer those practices to current day classrooms.

Across the board, all participants agreed that the overseas student teaching experience was a fine student teaching option. It allowed each participant ample time to plan and prepare creative and engaging lessons for the students. Reflective and thoughtful mentors, who were highly motivated and did much to help guide the student teachers, surrounded the participants. The only drawback to this student teaching experience, if there was one, was the lack of further exposure to state specific content standards. Although in fairness, I have no basis upon which to gauge a domestic student teacher’s exposure to content standards. I would imagine, however, that a domestic student teacher would be expected to highlight the connections between classroom objectives and activities to state content standards. Again, I can only present this as an assumption. I can, however, say with certainty that the overseas student teachers did not connect their lesson plans to state specific content standards. It is my belief that this minor blemish does not, in any
way, diminish the quality of professional teacher preparation offered in the overseas programs.

The Moral of the Story

I believe that this body of research adds a new wrinkle to the existing literature on overseas student teaching. This new research investigated five first year teachers and the way that their overseas student teaching experience impacted their perceptions about place sustainability and worldview. In addition, this research also examined the ways overseas student teaching impacted classroom practice with specific regard to those three domains.

This new study adds to the work of those who have conducted research concerning the after-effects of overseas student teaching. Cushner and Mahon (2002) reported an impact both on the personal and professional planes of learning and development after overseas student teaching. The examples included impacts on beliefs about self and others, acceptance, tolerance, commonalities, differences, and impacts on professional development in helping the student teachers to be more globally minded. Cushner and Mahon also reported that increased student teachers ability to navigate alternative worldviews. In that one regard, this work is similar. These participants also experienced a broadening of worldview.

Firmin's (2007b) work on the after effects of overseas student teaching reported an integration of cultural sensitivity to the classrooms of new teachers. I interpret this to be a broadening of worldview found in the results of Cushner and Mahon (2002). Like me, Bryan (1997) also worked with three domains following overseas
student teaching. He identified the domains as: instructional pedagogy, learning about oneself and appreciation and understanding of multiculturalism. In this instance, I consider an appreciation and understanding of multiculturalism to be much like a broadening of one’s worldview. In fact, much of this work stems form the initial intent of COST, which was to provide exposure to multi-cultural settings in a total immersion-type of setting. In other words, broaden worldview.

Stachowski, Bodle and Morrin (2008) also examined overseas student teaching as it related to three domains of professional development. The first was furthering understanding others in the world. The second was recognizing how they (the native teachers) lived and educating those children within existing cultural ideologies. The third was meeting the needs of the students by understanding the dynamics of the community. This clearly resonates with studies surrounding worldview, and it could be reasonably argued that this work also includes an examination of place. This work does not, however, make specific mention of literature regarding place-based education.

In an examination of post-overseas experience, Quezada (2004) offered a summary of the lessons learned abroad. The conclusions of this research included a heightened sensitivity to multiculturalism as a result of learning about the communities in which they worked. In a sense, this research suggested that immersion in a place resulted in a greater sensitivity toward individual beliefs about the values of the people in the place. Again, I see a strong tie to worldview and a weaker tie to study of place. These researchers reported results in one domain that is identical to mine: worldview. They also alluded to a second: place.
Although there are similarities, there are a few key differences. First, none of the research concerning the impacts of overseas student teaching mentions sustainability. Second, although these researchers alluded to a study of place, no specific references were made to the body of literature in place-based education. Third, my work considers the three domains (place, sustainability and worldview) as interconnected, whereas previous research considers results as separate and not inter-related. It is the connection between these three domains that makes my work unique.

As a result of overseas student teaching, my participants needed to examine their new place. This first-hand experience had with place led them to discoveries of sustainable practices specific to the region. These discoveries, in turn, resulted in challenging and broadening of worldview. Student teaching in an overseas context allows these three domains to be developed more fully. The conditions are ripe for this kind of development overseas. I believe that because students are placed in a foreign context, it is necessary to examine particular systems that would otherwise be overlooked in a more familiar (domestic) setting. In an unfamiliar context place, sustainability and worldview can be recognized and examined more easily.

Because overseas student teaching helps student teachers think about these three domains and develop their positions concerning these three domains, overseas student teaching projects should have these domains as part of their goals. In a world where resources are becoming more and more scarce, and the population continues to grow, a close examination of place and sustainability are paramount. Within that context, it is important to recognize that we live in a pluralistic society,
and it demands individuals with an open, developing (as opposed to developed) worldview. Overseas student teaching can help prepare future educators to deal with these issues in the classroom as they prepare future generations to successfully navigate the changing waters of this world.

I realize that the results presented here provide me with a reasonably strong case regarding the cognitive development of my participants within the three domains. I am not able to suggest that their growth in these three domains had any impact on their practice in classrooms as first year teachers. The five participants represented teachers in English, mathematics and history. Each one of them reported changed thinking in each of the three domains. Because that experience was had across the disciplines, I contend that these domains should be subjects that teacher educators consider more often as they train and prepare future educators.

Overseas student teaching prepares first year teachers well regardless of the type of position it might be. In this study alone, I had five first year teachers with four different types of jobs. One was overseas, one was a domestic substitute, two were in traditional domestic schools, and one was in what I might call an option school. All first year teachers in this study felt that their student teaching term abroad adequately prepared them for these positions. I cannot say with any certainty, however, that student teaching overseas has any impact on first year teacher’s willingness to include place, sustainability or worldview in their classroom curriculum. I do feel comfortable saying that student teaching overseas brought these concepts to a more prominent place in their cognition. Time will tell if this results in actual classroom practice.
When I look at where we are in this world, what conditions teachers will perform under, and the future their students will have to face, providing opportunities for student teachers to closely examine place, sustainability and worldview is of the utmost importance. In this research, I discovered that overseas student teaching is a tremendous context in which to gain a first-hand experience in those three domains. Because of the future we all face, teachers need to be equipped to tackle place, sustainability and worldview in their classrooms within their content area and teacher educators need to be able to prepare future teachers to do so.
Referenes


Teaching and teacher Education 24(7): 14.


Website: http://www.thestoryofstuff.org


Appendix A

Where You At? A Bioregional Quiz
Developed by Leonard Charles, Jim Dodge, Lynn Milliman, and Victoria Stockley.

1. Trace the water you drink from precipitation to tap.
2. How many days until the moon is full? (Slack of 2 days allowed.)
3. What soil series are you standing on?
4. What was the total rainfall in your area last year (July-June)? (Slack: 1 inch for every 20 inches.)
5. When was the last time a fire burned in your area?
6. What were the primary subsistence techniques of the culture that lived in your area before you?
7. Name 5 edible plants in your region and their season(s) of availability.
8. From what direction do winter storms generally come in your region?
9. Where does your garbage go?
10. How long is the growing season where you live?
11. On what day of the year are the shadows the shortest where you live?
12. When do the deer rut in your region, and when are the young born?
13. Name five grasses in your area. Are any of them native?
14. Name five resident and five migratory birds in your area.
15. What is the land use history of where you live?
16. What primary ecological event/process influenced the landform where you live?
   (Bonus special: what's the evidence?)
17. What species have become extinct in your area?
18. What are the major plant associations in your region?
19. From where you're reading this, point north.
20. What spring wildflower is consistently among the first to bloom where you live?

Scoring
• 0-3 You have your head up your ***.
• 4-7 It's hard to be in two places at once when you're not anywhere at all.
• 8-12 A firm grasp of the obvious.
• 13-16 You're paying attention.
• 17-19 You know where you're at.
• 20 You not only know where you're at, you know where its at.
Appendix B

Interview Questions

Place Questions

1. Describe the classes you teach. Subjects? How many students?

2. Who are the students? SES? Special needs?

3. How many are from the area and how many moved in from some other place?

4. Describe your colleagues, particularly those in your department. Male/female?

5. Level of education?

6. How long have they been teaching?

7. Where were they educated?

8. Are they from the area or have they moved from someplace else?

9. Describe your school.

10. What does the physical building look like from the outside? The inside?

11. What is the best attribute of the school?

12. What is the biggest shortcoming of the school?

13. Describe the community that the school is in? Affluent/poor/mixed?

14. Describe the values of the community (religious/political, etc)?

15. How do you see those values reflected in any part of the school (the building itself, the curriculum, the attitude of the faculty)?

16. Finally, tell me one thing that makes the place you teach unique. Name a quality or characteristic of the school or community that you would not find anywhere else. It might be a geographical feature, a historical fact, or something related to the main industry in town.
Worldview Questions

1. How do you define worldview?

2. If worldview is a system that establishes a framework within which people think (reason), interpret, and know, how would you describe your framework form those three perspectives?

3. C.S. Lewis wrote in The Magicians Nephew that “What you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing; it also depends on what sort of person you are” (p. 125). Describe yourself in terms of where you stand and what type of person you are.

4. If I were to tell you that the first use of the word “worldview” occurred in a 1790 European (specifically German) text, but didn’t emerge in American writing until almost 100 years later, why would you guess this happened?

5. Should/is a worldview subjective or objective and why?

6. Explain how worldviews may or may not be connected to issues of power or power struggles.

7. Do worldviews belong in public education classrooms? Why or why not?

8. If learning is to occur in a school or classroom, how important is it for the teacher and students to share a similar worldview? Why?

9. What do you think the relationship is between a person’s worldview and their physical actions or behavior?

10. Do your best to describe the worldview of the students and mentor teachers you worked with in Norway.

11. How did your experience in Norway change your worldview, if at all, and how did your experience in Norway change you as a person, if at all?
Sustainability Questions

1. What does the word sustainability mean to you? Define it.

2. Is sustainability something that is important to you? Does sustainability matter to you?

3. How important is it for students to learn about sustainability in public schools? Give an example of something a student could learn about sustainability as a result of going to school.

4. What are some areas and ways that schools can make obvious efforts toward operating in a sustainable manner?

5. What is ecological literacy?

6. Is a public school an appropriate venue to develop pro-sustainability ideals? Would you consider it to be an effective venue?

7. What is the importance of a relationship between an individual and nature/environment?

8. What is the relationship between sustainability and worldview?

9. Is sustainability related to standard of living or quality of life (social, economic, environment)?

10. Is the issue of sustainability simple or complex? Why?
Teacher Preparation Questions

1. What did your experience in Norway do to your perception of the relationship between place and education?

2. Is it more important to have global experience or local experience in order to be an effective teacher?

3. How well were you prepared to adapt to the evolving characteristics of a community and the expectations of the communities in which you work?

4. What did your experience in Norway do to your perception of the relationship between worldview and education?

5. Were you prepared to and do you have the opportunities to advance global and intercultural perspectives?

6. How did this help you to expand your views and your practices toward increasing global understanding?

7. What did your experience in Norway do to your perception of the relationship between sustainability and education?

8. Were you prepared to effectively educate any child anywhere in the world?

9. Did your experience in Norway help you to learn to question practice and change actions in response to the needs of students?

10. Which direction do you fall...are you aware of possibilities in teaching or are you more likely to accept the status quo?

11. How did teaching in Norway prepare you to address the standards facing you in this country?

12. How did Norway effect your ability to educate whatever level of diversity is presently in your school?

13. Do you feel like you learned the same things as those who student taught domestically?

14. What experience had you previously had with people who were significantly different from yourself?

15. Could you learn to be a competent teacher and learn intercultural effectiveness in a domestic experience?

16. Language aside, how different was it from teaching in the US?
17. Describe how you developed personally and professionally as a result of Norway student teaching.

18. Compare the degrees to which you were/are encouraged to use reflection as a means of professional growth.

19. What does it mean to be a critically reflective thinker? How does this manifest itself in your teaching?

20. How do you think it impacted your job search?

21. Was the monetary cost worth the reward?

22. Describe how this helped you develop your skills in intercultural collaboration.

23. How has this made you or prepared you to be culturally competent?

24. How well did your course work prior to student teaching prepare you for both Norway and your present position?

25. Would you describe yourself as culturally incapable, culturally competent or culturally proficient?

26. What impact do you feel you had on your host community?
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