Civic Sustainability Thinking:
The Synergy between Social Studies and Educating for Sustainability

Dissertation

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By

Bethany Vosburg-Bluem, M.Ed.

Graduate Program in College of Education and Human Ecology

The Ohio State University

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Doctoral Examination Committee:

Dr. Binaya Subedi, Advisor       CEHE School of Teaching and Learning
Dr. Merry M. Merryfield          CEHE School of Teaching and Learning
Dr. Joe E. Heimlich              School of Environment and Natural Resources
Dr. Rick Livingston             CAS Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities
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Abstract

This qualitative grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) study seeks to explore the relationship between social studies education and sustainability education. It does so by first examining the conceptualizations and classroom practices of social studies teachers to determine their perceptions of social studies through their narratives and what they enact in their classrooms. It then examines what their perceptions and practices indicate about the potential connections between social studies and sustainability education.

Social studies education and sustainability education are the two constructs being explored in this study. Social studies is predicated upon the civic mission to promote civic competence by helping young people to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good by applying the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions required of them to be active and engaged citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (NCSS, 2010). Sustainability education seeks to develop informed, reflective and action taking citizens who are able to balance their rights to a clean, safe and fulfilling environment with their responsibilities to present and future generations and to other species. Such citizens should have a theoretical and practical understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens across a number of domains (economic, political, cultural, environmental) at all scales from the local to the global (local/community, national, global) as well as recognition and understanding of
the importance of the interconnectedness of these systems. They will need to be mindful of and have respect for diverse points of view and interpretations of complex issues from cross- and/or multi-cultural (i.e. racial, religious, ethnic), regional and intergenerational perspectives. And lastly, they will need to care for the community of life through the building and strengthening of democratic societies which seek social, economic and environmental justice for all (Huckle, 2004; Byrne, 2000; UNESCO, 2002; Earth Charter, 2000).

Through interviews with five secondary social studies teachers from three diverse schools, classroom observations and the analysis of their lesson plans, supplemental resources, and textbooks an extensive data corpus was compiled. An intense constant and comparative analysis process yielded several categories and themes. Using these, memos and the same analysis process, I employed theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) using newly identified literature that connected to the new emerging categories.

The primary findings suggest that there is natural convergence between social studies and sustainability education. Further thoughtful and strategic inclusion, reframing and complexity will result in their total effect being greater than the sum of their individual parts, thus indicating a synergistic relationship between the two and resulting in the construct, Civic Sustainability Thinking.
Dedication

To my mom, the butterfly who has always been here to guide me.

To my mom-in-law, who kept pushing me along.

To my dear husband, John, who stood by me and believed in me before, during and now.

And

To ALL of my family and friends for their patience and encouragement.
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My Saunderlane neighbors

ALL others along the way, each and every one of you are part of my whole…
Vita

1966 ..............................................Born in Binghamton, NY
1988 ..............................................B.S. Psychology, Wright State University
1992 ..............................................Secondary Social Studies Certification
                           Wright State University
1994 - 2006 ......................................Social Studies Educator, Kettering Fairmont
                           High School, Kettering, Ohio
2001 ..............................................M.Ed, Wright State University, Fairborn, OH
2006 - 2012 ......................................Graduate Teaching Associate, CEHE T& L
                           The Ohio State University

Publications

and individualism in America. Educational Studies, 44.

lives of women in Southern Africa. In The human impact of natural disasters: Issues for
inquiry-based classroom. NCSS Bulletin, 37-44.
Fields of Study

Major Field: Education

   Social Studies and Global Education
   Urban Education
   Sustainability Education
   Qualitative and Quantitative Research
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## Introduction

Summary of the study

What did I learn

*Social studies is…Complex and connection making expectations*

*Social studies is …Purposeful classrooms and modeling*

*Social studies is…Putting it all together*

## Interpreting the connections

Discussion

Social Studies develops fundamental complex and dynamic thinking

and application skills

Social Studies is/as a viable pathway for creating a sustainable future through

## Civic Sustainability Thinking

## Implications

*Social Studies*

*Students*

*Teachers*

*Professional Development and Teacher Education*

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## Conclusion

*Evaluative criteria*

*Concluding thought*

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Chapter One - Introduction

Introduction

Civic competence, as the goal of social studies, relies on a “commitment to
democratic values, and requires that citizens have the ability to use their knowledge about
their community, nation, and world; to apply inquiry processes; and to employ skills of
data collection and analysis, collaboration, decision-making and problem-solving”
(NCSS, 2010, p.3). In turn, this enables citizens to “engage in civic discourse” and “to
take informed civil action (p.12).” The knowledge sought and issues covered in the
social studies classroom cuts across all of the social science disciplines, the humanities,
the natural sciences, mathematics, and place/space and time. It is, perhaps, the most
inclusive and interconnected of the educational disciplines. The expansive amount of
skills and content, geographically and historically, to some, is overwhelming, unfocused
and unorganized, yet others view it as an opportunity to make unbounded, non-linear,
just, relevant, democratic and potentially transformational connections to their students’
lives, community and world around them (Evans & Passe, 2007). Following the second
line of thought, this study seeks to explore what role social studies, with its expansive
reach and interdisciplinary disposition, could play in addressing the increasingly complex
and dynamic economic, environmental, political and social issues facing our world today
and in the future. Enter the concept of sustainability, it’s most recognized, yet contentious
definition claims it as the need to “meet the needs of the present without compromising
the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987), though it is most simply recognized as the ability to endure. A more thoughtful, relevant definition that relates more directly to the context of this study states:

Sustainability is about building healthy, resilient communities where everyone has access to the resources needed to achieve a high quality of life without exceeding the capacity of our natural ecosystems. It involves making decisions to promote values that support long-term ecological, social and economic balance through the promotion of environmental conservation, economic prosperity and social responsibility (SU-SfC, 2012).

The emergence of sustainability as an integrating theme (DiMaggio, 2000) for tackling local and global uncertainties has provided an opportunity for scholars, educators, and a variety of other stakeholders to investigate how their field, their discipline or vocation will be able to play a part in the purposeful design of an enduring existence for all life on this planet (UNESCO, 2005). This undertaking, though seemingly monumental, is nonetheless possible, and the alternative, an unsustainable existence, is contrary to the instinct of survival. Aspiration for and effort toward survival is an inherent ongoing process throughout the natural world and for many in the social world. However, what would seem to be intuitive for humanity, history and our current state of affairs suggests this may not be the case.

As an educator, a developing scholar, a local and global citizen, and a human being I intend to play my part by focusing my research efforts in an area that I believe I am most proficient: social studies education. This study will explore the nature of the relationship between social studies education and an emerging international educational
model created to address the current and future state of our world: Education for Sustainable Development\(^1\) (ESD) (Hopkins and McKeown, 2001). The assumption, on my part, of the existence of a relationship is based upon my experiences as a social studies educator as well as my recent scholarly exploration and transition toward becoming a globally-minded educator.

**Background and Context**

“...different versions of a connective Humboldtian ecology arose from various strands of scientific thought, but they also grew out of a concern with social divisions: the deepening gulf between classes; the new division of labor; the overspecializations of professions and, in the professional arena, the increasing separation between science and art; the constant tension surrounding race and ethnicity; the hardening of separate gender roles; explosive regional differences; and especially, the apparent divide between civilization and nature.”

Aaron Sachs in The Humboldt Current, 2006

“...we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as with our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world.”

Earth Charter Preamble, 2007

Created by a diverse composition of members of international civil society, representatives of Non Governmental Organizations (NGO), international businesses and

\(^1\) Education for Sustainable Development was initiated by the United Nations in 1992 through Chapter 36 of its publication, Agenda 21: Program of Action for Sustainable Development (UNCED, 1992). Its mission is to integrate environmental and development education into all disciplines has experienced ongoing critical deliberation regarding its pedagogical, political and philosophical aims and perspectives. As a result, there has been an emergence of “alternative approaches” and terminology (Nikel, 2007), including ‘Education for Sustainability’ (EfS), ‘Sustainability Education’ (SE), ‘Education for a Sustainable Future’ (ESF) and ‘Schooling for Sustainability’ (SfS). This study will employ the use of ‘Education for Sustainability’ (EfS), ‘Sustainability Education’ (SE) interchangeably. Chapter Two will provide more detailed definitions and explanations of the evolution and usage of these terms.
corporations, and developed over eight years, the Earth Charter is a plea to the world to take notice and more importantly to take action (Corcoran, 2004). Consider the following global headlines found in the online newspaper: One World South Asia in 2009: “Water people of Andes face extinction”; “Biggest [carbon] emitters seek consensus before Copenhagen”; “Climate change [related disasters] to hit 375 million by 2015”; and on a more optimistic note… “New feminist network for ‘glocal’ activism” and “Aboriginal people for greater role in climate debate”. Those who are living in the particular place where the issue is occurring experience these global issues at a local level. Likewise, they are also transnational and borderless, affecting multiple communities in all regions of the World. The quote above by Humboldt, a 19th century explorer and environmentalist, captures the early essence of the drive for a deeper understanding of these connections across geography and history. The issues identified by the global and local headlines cut across economic, social, environmental, cultural, political, as well as temporal and spatial dimensions. They demonstrate that the interdependence and interconnectedness of the world we live in now, is the result of decisions from our past that will certainly shape our future.

Many scholars have associated the current human level of connectedness and its shared causes and shared impacts, with the forces of economic globalization (Gaudelli, 2004; Merryfield, 2001; Tye, 2003; Parker, 2004; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2003). Globalization has simultaneously expanded and shrunk the world we live in by increasing the economic and technological reach and opportunities of corporations and individuals and also by drawing societies, cultures, people, and the environment together. This has resulted in interactions with both beneficial and detrimental consequences. Not only are
the effects of global issues experienced by increasing numbers of people and regions, the
depth and breadth of knowledge about these issues through a variety of information
sources are more pervasive. One of the technological components of globalization, the
internet, enables materials and information to be directly accessed by consumers and
distributed by suppliers of such products through the all-encompassing World Wide Web.
The hyper-progression of technology in all its forms has become, for many, the panacea
for issues facing our world (Orr, 1992). Regardless of our perspective toward
globalization and its economic and technological scope and expectations, we must be
mindful that these global developments, changes and interactions have also resulted in
unprecedented growth, gaps, consumption, polarization, irreparable damage, and
injustices to both the social and natural world. In our mindfulness, we are faced with the
consideration of complexities and potentialities about our world beyond any that we have
previously experienced.

These diverse, widespread and interconnected outcomes have brought about the
re-conceptualization of how we perceive the world in which we live in, how we learn
about that world, and how we are to educate future citizens to live sustainably in the
world (Gaudelli, 2004; Merryfield, 2001; Tye, 2003; Parker, 2004; Kirkwood-Tucker,
2003; Meyers, 2006; McKeown & Hopkins, 2007; Disinger, 1990). These changes
require a worldview and paradigm shift (Edwards, 2005) in how we address these
complexities in education, particularly in the social sciences. New and/or revised
educational approaches are called upon to examine how we view the interconnectedness
of the world, how we critically-assess and manage current and emerging issues, and how
we determine what actions need to be taken to ensure survival. The global approaches
conceived and instituted by a diverse assembly of stakeholders, have resulted in a variety of autonomous yet often overlapping “intentions and objectives” (Edwards, 2005, p7). The previously established and evolving frameworks of global citizenship education, global education, human rights education, environmental education, peace education, and futures thinking education have all addressed these global issues and their place in education from a variety of scholarly perspectives (Parker; 2004; Pike & Selby, 1995; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2003; Hanvey, 1976; Merryfield, 1998, 2000, 2001; Tye, 2003; Hicks, 2003; Andrezejewski, 2005; Yablon, 2007; Hung 2007; Tilbury and Henderson, 2003; Hicks, 2004 a & b, 2008). These frameworks, presumably, use their own lens to assess the best content and course of action to create informed strategies for education, all with the collective aim of building a stronger, healthier, balanced and sustainable state of the world.

Some fields of education have embraced the significance of global interconnectedness, such as engineering, architecture, medicine, business, and technology (Friedman, 2005), and many are moving towards this interconnected consciousness and yet others such as many in the political and education sectors do not acknowledge, and even rebuke, any need for an alternative perspective (Grabar, 2010). In the field of social studies’ education, Myers (2006) laments: “implications of globalization have not been taken seriously as a curriculum topic in social studies education, I argue that the central purpose of social education is weakened when divorced from an understanding of how national problems are linked to social, political and economic issues at a global level (p. 389).” Though Myers recognizes the failure to examine and include the complex local, national, and global connections, he himself fails to include the equally relevant
and pervasive environmental issues associated with globalization. In the current US political and economic climate, the range of educational responses to the impact of globalization are not surprising when considering the potential contentious social and institutional transformations resulting from such recognition. This study will begin to explore what social studies’ relationship is to the consequences and solutions to globalization, as well as how it is both conceptualized and practiced.

What social studies’ curricula and other educational disciplines in the US may not be currently and directly confronting on an official or national level, other nations and UNESCO are addressing at the international level (Myers, 2006; McKeown, 2002; Merryfield, 2000). At the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Bonn, Germany in April 2009, the opening speaker Mr. Matsuura stated in his address:

In a world trying to come to grips with a major financial and economic crisis, with environmental degradation and climate change, with social tensions and conflict, there is a growing global consensus that the international community must unite to prepare for a better common future. This consensus was anticipated by the decision of the UN General Assembly to create a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD), running from 2005 to 2014, in recognition of the critical role that education plays in development. But, it is just not any kind of education. It is about learning for change and about learning to change. In particular, it is about the content and processes of education that will help us to learn to live together sustainably. (UNESCO, 2009)
The “Decade” is now nearly over and we in education must ask ourselves, does the content and do the processes within our educational system, specifically our classrooms, contribute to learning for change, the kind of change needed to live together sustainably? Thoughtful and judicious inquiry must take place with regard to the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)/Educating for Sustainability (EFS) throughout the entire international educational community and for my research interests within social studies’ classrooms in the United States.

Internationally, progress has been made in all of the four major ESD objectives:

1. Improving basic education (addressing poverty, development, gender)
2. Reorienting existing education
3. Increasing public awareness about ESD
4. Developing specific training programs for ESD (McKeown, 2002).

Countries such as Australia, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have sustainability frameworks and initiatives in place for their education systems (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; SOSI, 2009; USP, 2009). However, as McKeown noted in 2002, overall little progress had been made in Western countries with regard to reorienting education, though she did acknowledge that individual disciplines, schools, programs, and educators have made laudable contributions. Fortunately, the US has made more progress since McKeown’s 2002 assessment. There has been an increase in the number of the reorientation and implementation efforts including broad as well as intermittent local, state and national efforts.

Currently in the US, on the national level, the US Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development (USPESD) has created and published, though not nationally mandated, a set of K-12 Education and Teacher Education Standards (USPESD, 2009).
In terms of statewide initiatives: Washington, Oregon, Vermont, California and Connecticut have instituted sustainability themes into their state education standards. States such as Minnesota and New Jersey receive resources and some funding support from various non-profit sustainability organizations (SOSI, 2009). An increasing number of these organizations are independently moving the sustainability education agenda forward by holding conferences, workshops, seminars, and institutes, such as the Sustainability Education Summer Institute in Seattle, Washington; the Cloud Institute’s Advanced Summer Institute in New York City and Shelburne Farms Cultivating for Sustainable Future Workshops in New Hampshire. The initiatives advanced by a handful of states, organizations, schools and individuals are promising steps toward realizing the Education for Sustainable Development objectives. However, there is still much to be explored and actualized in order to achieve the ESD goals and ultimately the transformational changes necessary to create a sustainable common future.

Research Questions

My interests and experiences, as a social studies classroom teacher and as a graduate student studying both social studies and sustainability shaped this research topic and these research questions. As I reviewed the growing body of sustainability literature, I began to question the potential relationship between social studies’ education and Education for Sustainable Development/Sustainability Education. My personal experiences working with social studies’ teachers led me to be curious about how teachers perceive and fulfill the goals of their discipline through their instructional
decision-making and classroom practices, regarding the most pressing global issues of
our time.

In framing my questions, I employed Strauss and Corbin’s (1998),
recommendation of asking a central question that begins broadly and “becomes
progressively narrowed and more focused during the research process as concepts and
their relationships are discovered” (p. 41). The following is the broad central question
developed through the course of this study and based upon my positional assumption of
the existence of a relationship:

\[ \textit{What is the relationship between social studies and sustainability education?} \]

My intent was to explore the potential existence of sustainability education principles
within the framework of social studies teacher’s thinking and practices as well individual
course objectives. Each of the following sub-questions framed the study and provided
structure to the analysis and interpretation of the data, so that any insights into these areas
were explicitly explored:

1. How do social studies teachers conceptualize the goals of social studies
   education?

2. How is social studies practiced or enacted in the classroom?

3. What do social studies’ teachers perspectives and classroom practices
   indicate about potential connections between social studies and
   sustainability education?
Purpose of this study

The purpose of this naturalistic grounded inquiry was to explore teacher’s conceptualizations of the goals of social studies and their classroom practices and how they are both related to the goals and principles of education for sustainability (EfS). In identifying the relationships and connections, this research study sought to unearth potential pathways for fostering educating for sustainability in the social studies classroom. It was my assertion that, if the principles of Sustainability Education were already embedded within the social studies goals, curricula and resources, then liberating them and assisting teachers to see the connections between what they may already be doing and the goals of educating for a sustainable future will be a less arduous task than completely redesigning the curriculum. It is anticipated that these findings will afford social studies and sustainability education researchers, teacher educators, and current and future social studies teachers insight into educating students for a sustainable future through the lens of social studies education. Though generalizability was not the goal, the findings are intended to inform both teacher education and professional development education programs on how to thoughtfully guide future and current social studies educators in how to successfully prepare their students with the skills and knowledge necessary to create their own sustainable future. Teacher education, from the onset, has been acknowledged as a vital component in producing a sustainability-literate population (Wheeler & Byrne, 2003; Nolet, 2009). Likewise, professional development programs are another essential consideration in enabling current educators to update and deepen their knowledge base and practices (Cloud, 2010; Gayford, 2001). Lastly, this study and its findings are anticipated to encourage and inform future researchers addressing the social
studies disciplines and their role in educating and transforming student learning in the 21st century. Examining the concepts and principles potentially embedded within the perceived goals and practices may facilitate further replication of this study in other universities, schools, and classrooms. Thus adding to the discourse the diversity and depth necessary to initiate empirically-supported teacher training, professional development and classroom implementation.

**Statement of opportunity:**

In this study, I specifically focus on how sustainability may be naturally embedded and infused into the social studies curriculum. The overarching or big picture issue is the lack of widespread success throughout the international community in following through with Agenda 21, the United Nations Environment Programme’s framework for action toward creating a sustainable world. Governments, scholars, educational organizations, practitioners, etc, have struggled to define and to identify a space for Education for Sustainable Development within their diverse range of existing and sometimes barely existent education systems (Stevenson, 2007). To meet and address these ongoing challenges, there have been numerous conferences, councils and discussions that have focused on the Agenda 21 goal of reorienting education towards Education for Sustainable Development.

On a smaller yet equally significant scale, the specific problem I have focused upon speaks to the educational efforts and movement within the United States towards educating our students for a sustainable future. To date, most endeavors within the US to implement the content of ESD/EfS/SE have been by a limited number of alternative
school efforts, isolated programs, interdisciplinary teams of teachers, and individual
science and elementary educators (McKeown, 2002; Stevenson, 2007). These efforts are
laudable and crucial, since this bottom up or grassroots approach can be very successful
due to the ownership and commitment of those who choose to pursue it. Roslyn
McKeown (2002), described this “strengths model”, coined by Charles Hopkins, as
combining the efforts of a variety of the above components and weaving them together to
create a system that “conveys the knowledge, issues, skills, perceptions and values
associated with ESD without adding substantial costs to school systems” (p. 22). By
tapping into what US educators are already doing in their individual classrooms and
within schools, administrators can harness the energy and the natural interest of such
educators to aid in expanding and sharing their knowledge with their colleagues and their
schools. Encouraging educators to empower each other, their schools and their local
communities would appear to be germane to the current school funding and deficit
reduction climate on the local, state and federal levels. In addition, McKeown adds: “we
could accomplish much more by working with our own governments and school systems
to shift their goals toward sustainability, thereby furthering ESD” (p. 22). This approach
facilitates democratic action by individuals and their communities rather than simply
waiting for top down policy changes to occur.

The research to support these efforts has not been contained in a unified body of
work and is therefore dispersed into a variety of academic areas (Heimlich, 2007). For
example, in formal education, environmental education (EE), the closest next of kin to
Sustainability Education (SE), has been situated within the science curriculum, has its
own standards and outcomes, and has been not aligned with goals and strategies, though
efforts have been made to integrate/combine the two. A critical review of environmental education has yielded its lack of more socially inclusive curricula, such as social justice and equity issues (McKeown, R. & Hopkins, C., 2007: Feinstein, 2009). There has also been a contentious debate within environmental education regarding the acquisition of knowledge, its relationship to behavioral change and the role of EE in general (Feinstein, 2009). Such issues have slowed and in some cases prevented EE from acquiring a mainstream or more prominent place within formal education, thus complicating its role as a pathway for the introduction or inclusion of the EfS framework. Very little scholarly research has been done specifically addressing SE/EfS in US primary and secondary schools in any curriculum area and virtually none of it informs the specific domain of focus for my research: social studies. There has been a significant amount of literature discussing higher education’s role in addressing sustainability issues, both structurally and throughout the curriculum (Stevenson, 2007; Wheeler & Byrne, 2003; Sterling, 2004). Much of the literature suggests it is higher education’s academic responsibility to lead the way. I propose it is essential for all levels of education and disciplines to lead the way and ideally to work together towards creating a sustainable common future, recognizing we all share and are interconnected through our present as well as our future.

As previously mentioned, research efforts, to date, have focused mostly upon Environmental Education as the current pathway through which ESD has been implemented. Internationally, Environmental Education has been the primary focus and avenue through which ESD has been most supported and actualized (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). In reviewing these efforts in the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency Office of Environmental Education (EPAOEE) and the National Environmental
Education Advancement Project (NEEAP) sponsored a survey that examined the status of “State-level Comprehensive EE Programs” (NAAEE, 2005). Based on the NAAEE survey, only 20 states have an EE Master Plan in place and only 14 states have a K-12 EE requirement in place with three states working towards putting the requirement in place. To be clear, “in place” refers to the existence of a Master Plan, not its implementation.

What was most disconcerting about these findings is ESD’s international support via EE and the lack of consistent and widespread support for environmental education within the US. This lack of US support may or may not be an indicator of the future of Education for Sustainability within the US education system. Though the survey showed an overall gain in plans and programs in the US, the reality that less than half of the states have EE offices and/or master plans does not make EE the most current or conducive pathway for ESD in the US. However, it is important that environmental education still be recognized as one of the many potential pathways and supported as such, in that the goal of educating for and creating a sustainable common future lies within all academic disciplines (McKeown, 2007; DiMaggio, 2000). The lack of a current specific path creates an opportunity for a widespread infusion of SE into all avenues of education, rather than determining which fields should or should not be considered. As McKeown and Hopkins (2005, 2007) stated previously, core subjects need to be focused upon for the implementation of EfS within formal education, as they have a more solid grounding in virtually all curricula.

The focus on social studies derived from my initial presumption that it was considered a core subject within the US curricula. However, there are divergent views with regard to the place held by social studies as a well-respected core subject in the US
formal education curriculum (NCSS, 2000; McGuire, 2007; Kovacs, 2009; Au, 2009). The perspective of not having a place or losing its place in the curriculum has been primarily driven by the consequences of federally-authorized actions such as the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, as well as the accountability and standard raising mandates of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* Act of 2002, both of which resulted in high stakes testing focusing mostly on reading and mathematics (Au, 2009), and the increased standardization of the curriculum. These policy driven movements have resulted in outcomes such as less time, space, and emphasis on the non-tested disciplines and in particular, the “decline of curricular importance” for social studies (Ross and Marker, 2009, p. 5). On the other side of the debate lies the discourse emphasizing the integrative and crucial role of Social Studies in developing global, well-informed, contemplative and active citizens equipped with skills enabling them to secure a democratic future as well as address the significant challenges of their local, their national, and global society (Chant, 2009; Merryfield, 1998; Ross, 2006). Ongoing efforts to secure the relevancy of social studies have been hindered by the war within the discipline in defining the field itself (Pace, 2007). A current call for “collaborative cross-state research”, which would serve to provide policy makers with a deeper and broader view into the “strengths and weaknesses of social studies programs”, is actively being organized to reassert social studies’ crucial role in developing civic minded and engaged citizens (Passe & Patterson, 2011, p.120). For the purpose of this study, I chose to align with the perspective recognizing that social studies does indeed have a much-valued place as a core academic subject.
Ross (2006) advocates that there is universal agreement that the primary goal of social studies is “the preparation of young people so that they possess the knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in society” or simply “citizenship education” (p. 20). NCSS (1992) adds that, “social studies programs reflect the changing nature of knowledge, fostering entirely new and highly integrated approaches to resolving issues of significance to humanity” (p. 2). My contention here is whether social studies is taught as a subject in and of itself or woven throughout subjects such as history, geography or economics, it retains the same basic goals and integrative nature. Vinson (1998) in a survey of social studies teachers found most related to social studies as “reflective inquiry” and “informed social criticism” (Ross, 2006, p. 21). Merge those sentiments with active participation in society and social studies takes on the role of promoting social transformation, with an “emphasis on teaching content, behavior and values that question and critique standard views accepted by the dominant society” (p.21). The economic, social, environmental and “eco-political” (Disinger, 1990), nature of education for sustainability combined with the potentially transformative civic nature of social studies education, creates a compelling line of reasoning supporting their purposeful integration. Other skills developed through the social studies curriculum (NCSS, 1992) such as higher-order thinking, decision-making, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, and perspective taking are also emphasized in sustainability education (Santone, 2003; McKeown et al, 2002).

Returning to EE research, a survey conducted for the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and the Environmental Literacy Council by the University of Maryland Survey Research Center (2002) found that 14% of those who
addressed environmental topics taught social studies. The 48% of the sample that did not address environmental topics did not do so because they felt it was not relevant to their curriculum. I argue that referring to these topics as “environmental” may actually inhibit social studies educators from identifying the relevancy of these issues in relation to their curriculum. However, since SE addresses the interconnectedness and dynamic interactions among political, social, economic, and environmental systems, the relevancy to the social studies curriculum becomes more apparent.

This study was designed as a potential contribution to the discovery of alternative and multiple pathways through which to address the increasingly complex and interrelated social, political, environmental, economic, and cultural challenges facing the world today and in the future. My part in this task was to investigate the prospective role of Social Studies as a conduit and SE as the framework through which such challenges can be reflected upon and addressed. What I intended to focus upon necessitated unearthing the potentially-embedded and unframed sustainability education principles within the social studies curriculum. The potential identification of intersections between social studies and education for sustainability will lead to enabling social studies teachers in facilitating their student’s learning and experiences with regard to creating a sustainable future for themselves and their world.

**Research Approach**

Qualitative research seeks to “study things in their natural (social) settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). The conceptualization of social studies
and enacted teaching practices and their relationship to the SE framework was best served using a qualitative, naturalistic approach. This section provides a brief explanation of the research methods employed and a brief demographic description of this study.

This qualitative research study employed a constructivist grounded theory approach. The main goal of grounded theory is to develop “theory from data obtained from systematic social research” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2) with the data as the only source of the emerging theory. Moving away from the assumption of an external reality, constructivist grounded theory emphasizes: “how data, analysis, and methodological strategies become constructed, and takes into account the research contexts and researchers’ positions, perspectives, priorities and interactions” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p.10). The central question of the study revolved around the examination of the relationship between social studies and sustainability education. However, the focus of the data collection centered on the teachers’ conceptualizations of the goals of social studies and their social studies classroom practices, not on sustainability education goals and practices. The concept of sustainability education was not included in the data gathering process until the very end of the study, once sufficient theoretical sampling/saturation had occurred. The analysis of collected data by the use of constant comparison, coding, theoretical sampling and a variety of other procedures enabled me to ground the theory development in the perceptions and experiences of the participants as social studies educators. These experiences included their conceptualizations, decision-making practices as well as their daily enacted experiences in the social studies’ classroom. This process will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.
The three female and two male participants in this study came from three different pseudonym-named secondary schools, Humboldt Academy (alternative), Carson High School (suburban) and Zimmerman High School (suburban). The courses they taught included: Global History, American Government/Civics and Global Cultures. Data collection methods included transcribed interviews (3 each), classroom observations (47 total) and document analysis of lesson plans, readings, textbook chapters, and project objectives. My goal was to construct theory grounded in the data and analysis since “theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). Constant comparative analysis of the data began with open coding and then moved to more focused coding and categorization. Theoretical notes and memos were developed and compared across all participants looking for common themes, similarities, and differences (Charmaz, 2006). Data analysis resulted in the development of three main findings related to the relationship between social studies, SS teachers’ thinking and practices, and the principles of SE.

Significance of the study

This study has the potential to provide significant contributions to the fields of Sustainability Education and Social Studies. It directly addresses three of the seven key strategic areas of focus to: “put knowledge into action and promote further progress in ESD during the next five years”, established by the Bonn Declaration during the recent World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2009). The three areas this study addresses include:
1. Building and sharing knowledge, as well as generating new knowledge through research.
2. Advocating for ESD, and increasing awareness and understanding of sustainability.
3. Further re-orienting education and training to address sustainability concerns (long term goal) (UNESCO, 2009)

   This research focused on the questions posed by McKeown and Hopkins (2005): “What is my discipline’s contribution to a more sustainable future?” and “What are the ties and linkages between my discipline and ESD?” (p. 221). The findings of this study provide insights into how social studies can develop into a viable avenue for educating students for a sustainable future. Controversial issues such as human rights injustices, environmental degradation and depletion, and economic inequities pervade the lives of teachers and students to varying degrees. As such, based on my presentation experiences at a number of local, national and international social studies’ conferences, I have encountered a diverse and significant number of social studies’ educators who are interested in addressing the concept of sustainability in their social studies courses. In addition, it is also intended to contribute to the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for both pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development specific to the needs of social studies educators. The call for social studies to take on a more transformative role in educating future globally-minded citizens (Banks, 1995; Houser, 2005; Gaudelli & Fernekes, 2004; Gaudelli, n.d.), is addressed by the social studies curriculum’s embedded connections to sustainability education’s principles and strategies. The transformative role will occur through their acquisition of the skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and behavioral changes needed to create a sustainable future.
The related fields of citizenship education, global education, and global citizenship education are all potentially informed by the findings of this study. The areas of content overlap and interconnect and the emphasis on skill acquisition and development between and among these fields and educating for sustainability are substantial and worthy of further investigation.

Lastly, the potential for a theory to emerge from this study would serve as a fertile base for future research and application. As an investigation into the existence and nature of the relationships between social studies goals and practices and sustainability education, it identifies a range of viable entry points for both researchers and educators. These entry points could assist teacher educators and classroom teachers in identifying where and how sustainability education relates to their specific subject as well as their epistemological orientations. I contend this study creates an “entry point” in and of itself by introducing an alternative and feasible opportunity for education to tackle some of the known and unknown challenges facing current and future citizens of the world.

**Limitations of the study**

The most pressing limitation involved my situatedness as a potential source of bias. As the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), I also recognized that my interpretations of the findings were relative to my knowledge base and experiences with the research topic. My interest and enthusiasm about this topic were challenging to contain; in addition, my inherent inclination to build relationships with all people with whom I interact, were personal dynamics that were noted and continually revisited throughout the research process. I initially designed this study to
account for the potential of a more interactive role for the participant and myself. I was concerned that the participants might feel, at some point, that they “should be” including sustainability in their narratives and/or classroom practices. This was also based upon the apprehension that I had about my own inadvertent actions, such as the over-explanation of a question or topic. I safeguarded against this by ensuring that I continually reflected upon and “checked” my reactions towards their responses and remained open about what I was learning through my interactions, data collection, analyses and member checks. Being vigilant and aware of my role as a researcher gathering data remained at the forefront of all of my reflections and interactions.

The other concern arose out of the potential for a lack of meaningful and rich data collection. The task of identifying social studies teachers who could be characterized as a sustainability educators appeared unachievable due to the lack of awareness of its existence in the literature as well as my own personal observations in the field as a teacher, student teacher supervisor, and graduate researcher. Therefore, the choice to purposefully not identify sustainability educators and instead focus upon the social studies component enabled me to constructively ground my findings in the teacher’s contextual reality. I chose to trust that something relatable would emerge from the data and I as a researcher would be prepared to illuminate and analyze it accordingly.

As with most research, this study was bounded by place and time. The five participants in this study are not representative of all social studies educators. Though great effort was made to adhere to a structured timetable, I found the challenge of data collecting, transcribing, coding, organizing and reviewing for timely follow-up to be greater than anticipated. As a result, opportunities for clarification of some of the data
were missed. In some data collection instances, I chose not to follow-up or dig deeper because I thought I understood what the teachers were saying or what I was observing, only to find at a later time that I had not understood them correctly. Sorting through and prioritizing what questions and concerns to readdress is an inherent subjective aspect of qualitative research. I approached this study with an acute mindfulness of, as Patton (2002) noted, the credibility of my study hinging on my skills, competence and rigor to ensure the quality of my inquiry methods and analysis.

**Organization of the Remaining Chapters**

This first chapter, served as an overall introduction to the body of work represented in this manuscript. Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant theoretical and research literature, as well as brief historical overviews of social studies and sustainability education. Chapter 3 provides a detailed narrative of the formal methodology including the research design, enacted processes and encountered realities. Chapter 4 presents the findings related to sub-questions one and two and Chapter 5 addresses sub-question number three. Lastly, Chapter 6 provides the synthesis and interpretation of the findings as they relate to the literature, the implications of the study, and a discussion of possible future research directions.
Chapter Two – Review of Social Studies, Sustainability Education and Teachers’
Decision Making Literature

Introduction

In this chapter I reviewed the related literature based upon the two educational areas I focused upon for my research topic, social studies education and its relationship to sustainability. This review was intended to provide a context for opening up a conversation about and examination of the relationship between social studies education and educating for a sustainable future. I reviewed the literature with the lens of potentiality, thus enabling the grounded theory methodology I employed to allow for the emergence of potential connections and relationships between the two educational approaches based upon the rigorous analysis of data collected. There are two principal components to this review: the first focused on a review of social studies literature and the second addressed the sustainability education literature. In the first section, I began with a brief overview of the development of social studies as a discipline, which focused on the vacillating and contentious evolution of its purpose. This section concluded with a review of social studies’ teacher’s conceptualizations and practices regarding some of the diverse, yet overlapping frameworks within social studies research. In the second section, I briefly examined the concept of sustainability then discussed the vision, development, and fundamental framework of Education for Sustainability. This section
concluded with a brief overview of sustainability education challenges, conceptualizations and current practices.

Similar to the contentious debate among social studies scholars described below, the grounded theory approach has experienced a long standing debate regarding the use of ‘a priori’ theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Glaser, 1992). Glaser (1992) stated that a review of the literature was not preferable before the research in order for the key components of the grounded theory method, discovery and emergence, to be realized. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argued that prior theory, some related literature and personal experience enabled the researcher to gain insight into the data. My view is most closely correlated with the latter, in that I am looking to begin a new conversation regarding the potential relationship between two pre-existing educational paradigms: social studies education and education for sustainability. Both sides of this debate do agree that the existing literature, some predicted and some only realized through the emerging theory, is to be used as an additional source of data (Heath, 2006; Charmaz, 2006). Further discussion of the grounded theory methodology I employed resides in Chapter Three.

To be clear, I am not a blank slate. Immediately prior to this research study I had fifteen years of secondary social studies teaching experience and three intensive years of coursework, which led me to focus on this area. This review of the related literature provides both transparency and insight into many of the understandings I brought with me into this research experience.
Social Studies

The role of social studies in the US education system has experienced a turbulent yet overall resilient existence. Current debates are over standards, testing, scope and sequence, and the very nature of social studies as a field of distinct social sciences versus the broader social education approach (Thornton, 2005). In order to justify its continued presence in an already overcrowded and incessantly critiqued system, the discipline has experienced a chronic re-examination of its purpose and place within the system. Expressed by many as an essential component to the educational system, it has had to endure more than its fair share of validation, though it could be argued that this has served to strengthen its purpose and secure its existence, albeit its placement may remain transient. This could also be perceived as testimony to its earliest conceptualized purpose as the study of the human experience across both space and time (Ross, 2006). As a contested and evolving construct, it has established an adaptive expertise, similar to the human experience across space/place and time. That is, in order to survive, social studies has established itself as a resilient and relevant educational discipline that its supporters will continue to thoughtfully and actively promote with continued reassessment and discourse. However, it will likely remain a contentious topic, thus sustaining its place in US educational discourse. This research study will examine yet another function or place for social studies in the educational arena, specifically as a pathway for creating a sustainable future.
History, goals and purpose

The intent of this section is to briefly discuss how social studies, as a discipline as well as a set of disciplines was/is defined, how it has evolved and finally to explore some of the current understandings of its goals and purposes. This is quite a task based upon the contentious nature among various perspectives (Ross, 2006), and therefore I will begin in a place where an important shift in its purpose occurred. The document titled, 1916 Compromise: The Report of the Social Studies Committee of the NEA Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education is considered the founding document of modern day social studies, as a discipline (Evans, 2004). This report shifted the focus from a traditional historical emphasis towards a more synthesized/interdisciplinary view of the subject matter with a greater emphasis on current history, issues, and social problems. The needs and interests of the students remained an important consideration, yet on the societal level there was a shift from an emphasis on interests and needs of the individual towards the needs of society as a whole (Evans, 2004; Ross, 2006). The battle lines between the history/subject based camp and the social science/studies camp, which I have referred to as the traditionalists and the progressives, had been drawn and the contentious discourse continues today (Thornton, 2005). The concentration on one side or the other is often based upon the major issues of the time period, such as wars (World War II, The Cold War, and Iraq), industrialization, increased immigration, social movements (The Civil Rights Movement) and terrorism/national security concerns (9/11) (Houser, 2009). This perhaps indicates the potential influence of perceived large scale societal change as a variable in the shift toward traditional or progressive leanings.
Citizenship Education

One general point of consensus with regard to the role or aim of social studies has been “citizenship education”, as Ross (2006) summarized from a diverse group of references as: “the preparation of young people so that they possess the knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in society” (p.20) and for: promoting the greater good of society (Hartoonian, 1991). Here again though, existed mindful inquiries in attempting to define what “citizenship” means including, questions concerning whom it refers to and who constructed it (Cary, 2010), the impact of locationality and positionality (Shinew, 2006), the flexibility of allegiances (Mitchell & Parker, 2008), and its role in curriculum and instruction (Avery, 2007; Parker, 2004).

The literature identified three traditions originally introduced by Barr, Barth and Shermis (1978) that have experienced a long period of discourse revolving around three conflicting objectives. The first and oldest defended social studies as an avenue for promoting social adaptation or assimilation of the views and values of the dominant society. The second endorsed social studies as social science, a tradition that promotes applying the scientific processes and tools to observe the world as a social scientist would. The last advocated social studies as a mechanism for social transformation through inquiry based critical and reflective thinking of the views held by the dominant culture (Ross, 2006; Evans, 2004). These conflicting objectives were closely synced with ideologies of the original two camps, the traditionalists and the progressives. Creating a sense of civic unity relied in part on a set of common and familiar ideas or values, yet whose ideas and whose values? Critical questions such as these lead a society toward a
broader perspective regarding what values and ideas can be shared in order to create a sense of unity and belonging.

Lastly, there is the debate over whether social studies should be viewed as a field of distinct social sciences (history, economics, sociology, etc.) or as an interdisciplinary social education approach whose broader purpose is to address current social problems (Thornton, 2005; Evans, 2004). Within the latter approach, issue-centered instruction was central, encouraging students to use higher order thinking skills (Engle, 1989) to deliberate past, as well as current and future issues relevant to the present day concerns of students. Also inherent to the issue-centered approach were controversial issues that supported the inclusion of deliberation opportunities, such as moral dilemmas, values clarification with some theorists advocating for social criticism/activism (Osler & Starkey, 2003). The resolution of social issues was motivated by a sense of obligation to others/common good and the recognition that social studies was built on a “foundation of ethical commitments and beliefs” (Farr-Darling, 2006, p. 266) including protection of democratic principles, responsibilities, values and freedoms, acceptance of diversity, fulfillment of people’s needs, and the promotion of social justice. Thus understanding one’s obligation to others in relation to those democratic ethical commitments and beliefs becomes an important principle in social studies education. Is it possible that this does not have to be an either-or proposition? Could it be argued that in the context of the classroom there is the likelihood of a convergence of all of the above orientations, with each leaving its mark on the other as well as the social studies educator (Ross, 2006)?

Addressing this question regarding social studies’ teachers’ conceptualizations of social studies through the lens of citizenship education, Anderson et al’s (1997)
well-constructed survey identified four national perspectives that were congruent to the
three Barr, Barth and Shermis established in 1978 as well as some other previously
discussed traditions. The four “widely varying” perspectives and their main
characteristics were:

1. Critical thinking perspective supports students’ reflecting critically on
the status quo and laws, asking questions about their school and
society and the recognition of their membership in a world
community rather than unreflective allegiance to the nation.

2. Legalist perspective stresses students’ obedience and respect for the law
and focuses on teaching students the individual, civil and political
rights of citizens.

3. Cultural pluralism recognizes the value of exposing students to a variety
of ideological perspectives that reflect the multicultural
experiences and values of groups including those in the local
community, across the nation and globally.

4. Assimilationism perspective endorses the transmission of what are
viewed as the dominant American values and thus encourages a
sense of patriotism, loyalty and civic duty to their nation. (p. 348)

Anderson et al (1997) did find a number of shared beliefs varying in degrees of depth and
scope relative to the individual viewpoints identified; these included promoting tolerance
and open-mindedness, addressing controversial issues, lifelong civic involvement and
addressing social values.

The discourses of all of the above perspectives have been heightened by what has
become an ongoing endeavor beginning in the early 1990s to create a set of national
standards. This effort has been met with an array of diverse positions regarding how the
standards should be composed (Buckles & Watts, 1998). The marginalization of the
social studies and its standards in the name of accountability has occurred through
governmental publications, such as the 1983 *National Commission on Excellence in
Education’s: A Nation At Risk Report* and the U.S. Department of Education’s *America 2000* report, which both emphasized the influence of history and geography and excluded any mention of social studies. This emphasis put the interdisciplinary, transformational, and social education aspirations in jeopardy and resulted in the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) taking prescriptive action (Evans, 2004). The result was the creation of a definition of social studies that would serve to assist individual states in the adoption of their content standards. According to the NCSS (2010), social studies is the

…integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (NCSSc, 1992/1994, Executive Summary).

This new definition of social studies, according to Evans (2006), resulted in an “umbrella for the teaching of history and the social sciences”, thus promoting the infusion of the social science disciplines into the core history, geography and civics courses. One of the most recent efforts to reconcile the various perspectives on how social studies should be taught and what should be included occurred through a dialogue between several NCSS members and social studies scholars. Discussed was a new definition recognizing that:
“multiple alternative approaches to the field exist, in theory and in classroom practice …thus embracing a plurality of approaches” (Evans and Passe, 2007, p. 252). A consensus was not reached, but a dialogue had begun in an effort to involve various stakeholders in defense of social studies existence as a broad and interdisciplinary field. As pointed out by Evans (2006), teachers are individuals and gatekeepers (Thornton, 1989) and even with the complex and evolving definitions, state standards, discipline standards, testing, etc. they do have choices and considerable freedom to choose from these multiple approaches.

**Related Frameworks, Lenses and Approaches**

The economic, social and environmental uncertainties we face do not have borders in time or space and must be examined through multiple lenses. The overarching question for this study asks: *What is the relationship between social studies and sustainability education?* The literature addressing three of the educational movements, traditions, and approaches that intersect and have been integrated with the SS curriculum and its primary purpose of citizenship education are briefly reviewed in this segment. The following literature discussion focuses on the movements, traditions and approaches that reinforce social studies’ primary role to educate citizens to be mindful of the knowledge, competencies and attitudes to participate responsibly, effectively, justly and democratically in all levels of civic life from one’s local community to the global community. Specifically, this section briefly discusses global citizenship education, global education, multicultural education, and the literature addressing their interconnections with social studies.
Global Citizenship Education

In reviewing the closely-linked frameworks of citizenship education and its transnational sibling, global citizenship education, both called for active and knowledgeable citizens who were caring and informed decision-makers, with the point of departure centering around national alliances and the reaction to the primary and collateral outcomes of globalization (Myers, 2006; Davies, Evans & Reid, 2005; Merryfield & Kasai, 2004). The effects of both globalization and alliances go beyond national boundaries into all realms of the social, political, economic, and natural world.

Davies, Evans & Reid, (2005) discussed three interconnected themes resulting from early discussions concerning the shift from questions about the existence of globalization to its perceived consequences. This warranted examination regarding their contribution to the changing nature of citizenship. These themes included the global economy, technology and communication, and population and the environment (Cogan, 1998). Myers (2006) recognized global citizenship as a more accurate frame for orienting social studies education because it accounted for the changing nature of citizenship “in the context of globalization” (p 371). In its position statement, A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy (1992), the NCSS reaffirmed “citizenship education as the primary purpose of social studies” (p.1). The NCSS (2010) curriculum framework does not employ the terms “global” and “citizenship” explicitly together, though there are multiple references such as using knowledge about the world, membership in the global community and global connections, thus reinforcing its inclusion as an essential perspective for acquiring civic competence in the 21st century and beyond. Another essential component of both
citizenship/global citizenship education is the emphasis and value placed upon civic participation (NCSS, 2001; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). Both frameworks seek to empower individuals to get involved, make community and globally minded responsible decisions, and to participate in implementing solutions to the various issues and concerns prevalent in one’s world, both locally and globally. The question of where to begin citizenship construction, pertaining to a local to global or global to local lens was addressed by Noddings (2005) in Astiz (2006) who stated “global citizenship education should complement national citizenship by revealing and demonstrating these core principles within the context of the local environment” (p.118), that is to start local and move toward a global orientation. Gaudelli and Fernekes’ (2004) action research study examining human rights in the context of global citizenship asserted that: “the notion of global interdependence is fundamental to the appropriate study of human rights because it is an idea that necessarily transcends national boundaries” (p. 25). They argued that human rights education that is only examined in a nationalistic context will only deepen the (mis)perception that: “injustice in any place endangers no one but those threatened,” (p.25) rather than encouraging students to defend the humanity of all people. Global citizenship education broadens the concept of citizenship to include the development of students’ identifications with their local communities, nation-states and the global community (Banks, 2004) also broadens the context through which to examine issues that cut across all communities.
Global Education

A framework that has significantly contributed to my educational journey and eventually led me to my research focus is global education. Its primary purpose is to prepare students for the increasing interconnectedness and interdependency among and across people and nations. Merryfield and Subedi (2006) wrote about “world-centered” global education in which teachers are encouraged to use strategies focusing on alternative histories that challenge the traditional Eurocentric perspectives through experiencing the perceptions and voices of people from all regions of the world as well as the diverse perspectives within those regions. Other essential themes of global education include the ability to have and use multiple perspectives when examining issues (Tye, 2003; McKeown & Hopkins, 2002; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005); the recognition of the world as an interconnected dynamic system (Hanvey, 1976, 1982; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005), the global awareness of trends, conditions and developments that have no geographic boundaries (Hanvey, 1976), and the cutting across space and time in the examination of global issues and being able think towards the future (Jones, 2009).

Another salient theme emphasized in global education is social justice and “understanding the world-views of people under-represented in mainstream academic knowledge” (Merryfield, 2001, p.181) through “equity in representation and pedagogy for social justice” (Merryfield, 2001, p.182). Hicks (2003), examined the history of global education and discussed Pike and Selby’s 1995 model and its core elements, which included the:

1. issues dimension which focuses on major problems areas such as human rights, global financial crisis, environmental damage/care,
2. spatial dimension which explores the local to global and global to local connections
3. temporal dimension which examines the past, present and future interconnections
4. process dimension which highlights the civic participatory and action taking aspect of global education, how is it enacted?

These dimensions recognized the breadth and depth of global education, yet do they address their convergence and dynamic complexity in relation to each other?

There exist other debates over goals and purposes that range from global competitiveness to ethically transformative and empowering to holistic, all of which focus upon the centering of the human in consideration of a global perspective (Selby, 1999).

**Multicultural Citizenship, Multicultural Education and Social Justice**

Balancing unity and diversity both nationally and globally has been characterized as a fundamental goal in citizenship education (Banks, 2001). Multicultural citizenship enables students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to function in increasingly diverse ethnic and cultural communities. This form of citizenship is based upon the right to maintain one’s cultural and ethnic community values while participating in a shared national culture that also included their contributions. According to the modernist or early post-modernist perspective (Schwart, 1995), multicultural education (MCE) contributed to the broadening conceptualization of citizenship and is viewed as a comprehensive educational reform process designed to create systemic change based upon a call for cultural pluralism through content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, and equity pedagogy (Banks, 1995). Thus, multicultural education
instills in students’ positive ethnic and cultural community attitudes and behaviors, while simultaneously developing positive intergroup attitudes thereby facilitating their connections with the larger society. Whereas the critical postmodern perspective of multicultural education, in addition to all of the above, focuses on the causes of inequities and proposes to transform education and society at large, it also includes a broader conception of diversity, critical pedagogy, and education for social justice orientation (Schwart, 1995; Nieto, 1996). The discourses addressing the overlapping, divergent and often-confounding perspectives regarding multicultural education appeared to differ in one distinct area, critical pedagogy, and moved beyond “diversity itself as a goal and argues that diversity must be framed within a politics of cultural criticism and a commitment to social justice” (Estrada & McLaren, 1993, p. 31).

What does this mean in a social studies classroom?

Though some scholars in the literature recognized a natural and complementary relationship between multicultural and citizenship education, others saw a gap as a result of their development as two distinct topics (Parker, 1997). Marri (2005), in seeking to fill the gap, discussed in his study how three social studies teachers taught about and for multicultural democracy through a framework he referred to as classroom-based multicultural democratic education (CMDE). He reaffirmed the challenge of teaching about and for multicultural democracy and identified three obstacles. The first, classroom context, indicated that the demographic make-up of the students influenced practice, specifically the belief that not having a multicultural classroom inhibited the use of a multicultural curriculum. The second were teachers’ limited conceptions of diversity, such as only using race and/or ethnicity to determine diversity, thus not including gender,
language, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation and religion as valid forms of diversity. Lastly, encouraging critical thinking but not actively promoting the next step called for in the critical pedagogy process, the promotion of human agency and social transformation through social action (Freire, 1990; Neito, 1996). To balance this his participants believed the promotion of other contextualized democratic life skills (Banks, 1995; Singh, 2005) such as seeking multiple perspectives, critical reflection of the status quo and decision-making skills enabled students to feel empowered and work toward becoming socially active participants in a democratic society (Marri, 2005). This enactment of multicultural democratic education in which the teachers only promoted the early steps of critical pedagogy appears to occupy a space between MCE and the critical pedagogy associated with social justice education. Pang (1999) described the social justice framework as promoting the “liberation of oppressed students so they can develop a ‘voice’ for participation and change in society… and make strong connections between morality, responsibility and human and civil rights” (Thompson, 1998, p. 29). Critical pedagogy has been identified as the core educational approach in both multicultural education and social justice education, though there may be a spectrum of application from critical inquiry to active social transformation (Neito, 1996).

**Environmental and Ethical Citizenship**

Scholars have published a significant amount of literature, much of it international, which calls for the focus of citizenship/civic education to move towards ecological understandings and responsibilities with some referring to the concept of “environmental citizenship” (Adedayo, 1997; Houser, 2009; Dobson, 2003). A feature of
democratic citizenship has always been to recognize and balance rights and responsibilities of citizens. In a simplistic view of citizenship, one has been given the right to vote; therefore it is one’s responsibility to participate by voting and contributing to civic society. Likewise, the conceptualization that one has a right to a healthy environment leads to the implication that it is one’s responsibility to participate in working towards the goal of creating a healthy environment and promoting environmental citizenship (Dobson, 2003; Houser, 2009). Dobson (2003) has developed a template for a citizenship curriculum in the environmental context.

Houser and Kuzmic (2001) have advocated that a change in worldviews is needed to combat the “destructive perspectives rooted in the mechanistic, reductionist, hierarchical world view prevalent in the Western world for centuries” (p. 452). They and many others contend this worldview continues to be responsible for the ongoing oppression, poverty, pollution, overconsumption, desecration, resource depletion, and human and animals rights violations experienced across the planet we depend upon for our very survival. In an effort to involve social studies and citizenship education in reconceptualizing this perspective, Houser and Kuzmic (2001) have theorized from a number of diverse traditions to advocate for a connected approach to reality which requires the examination of information to always be done in relation to other forms of information. There are two essential themes which have emerged from years of social studies discourse, a focus on the needs of the community and the concept of connectedness, such as through the integration of disciplines for the purposes of citizenship education (Houser and Kuzmic, 2001; Gruenwald, 2003). Community and
connectedness are believed to be foundational to the examination and resolution of the increasingly complex and dynamic issues faced in the world today.

Though not all of these approaches spoke directly to “social studies” per se, they have advocated for the creation of competent citizens who will have the skills and knowledge to engage in taking action towards creating and living their lives in an ecologically, economically, and socially responsible manner.

**Sustainability - The concept**

*Sustainable*, to keep up or keep going, as an action or process, is a term that has become a common adjective in the 21st century. Some examples include sustainable agriculture, sustainable architecture, sustainable business, sustainable living, sustainable food, sustainable tourism, sustainable design, sustainable packaging, sustainable development, etc., and permeate all aspects of our society. The assumption and desire for some of the above examples would then be the long term or perhaps infinite existence of a particular form of agriculture and the ongoing ability to utilize a particular type of packaging material. This leaves a question or gap based upon the lack of an understanding about “what” will ensure the long term existence of an action, process or product as well as “how” it will be achieved. Its ambiguity, lack of detail in its meaning and purpose and ubiquitous use has made it somewhat of a cultural cliché. I have mentioned the concept *sustainability* together with *education* to a variety of educators and have found that they are familiar with the individual terms, but not combined as an
educational approach. Its connection to education is directly linked to the evolving concept and goals of *sustainable development* and education for sustainable development.

**Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**

In the process of becoming acquainted with the education for sustainable development (ESD) literature, I discovered an overabundance of perspectives, which addressed both the complexity and depth of ESD. Though in historical terms, it is a relatively new paradigm, scholars who have written about it have clearly given it sincere and passionate consideration with regard to its potential to transform human society as well as its obstacles. The impressive pace at which this body of literature is growing is helpful, hopeful and formidable. It is helpful because it provided a wide range of perspectives and theoretical support for those who are beginning to take an interest in the field. It is hopeful since this increase reflects a growing interest and commitment on the part of a diverse array of stakeholders, including; scholars, politicians, education boards, grassroots organizations, business leaders, average citizens, local, regional, and global communities, and so on (Houser, 2009; McKeown & Hopkins, 2005; USPESD, 2008; Orr, 1992; NAAEE, 2007; Hopkins & McKeown, 2001). This in turn may bring about the opportunity for widespread awareness, engagement and eventual universal implementation into all aspects of our lives and for the purpose of this research project, education. The formidable reality embodies the same aspects that make this endeavor, helpful and hopeful. The dynamic complexity of the concept of sustainability along with the diverse quantity of intervening variables and stakeholders may create a feeling for many, of an unreachable goal.
The remainder of the section will begin by reviewing the relevant literature that addresses the 1.) the definition of sustainable development, 2.) the vision of education for sustainable development, 3.) an overview of how ESD came to be, 4.) the significance of its implementation 5.) its fundamental principles and goals and 7.) current efforts and challenges. The depth of this first section is attributed to the relative novelty of these concepts and how they relate to education.

**Sustainable development defined**

Beginning in the early 1970s, the United Nations began publishing reports that recognized that the levels of resource use and overall state of the planet were moving beyond a sustainable level and if significant economic and environmental measures were not taken, the planet, its resources and quality of life would be jeopardized (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). The concept of sustainable development first came about in 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) wrote the report “Our Common Future”. In it the most widely know definition of sustainable development was introduced and credited to Gro Brundtland, who stated, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43). As mentioned earlier, the concept has evolved and been reinterpreted by a variety of scientists, scholars, governments, NGOs, business executives, etc. Many definitions exist in the literature on ESD, and they all call for a positive vision and committed engagement towards building a sustainable society based on three critical issues: economic viability, environmental health, and social equity. (McKeown et al, 2002; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005;
Rowe, 2005; Huckle, 2007; Pepper & Wildy, 2008; UNESCO). The key difference between the ways of living in the past versus how we need to live today and in the future lies in the understanding of how these three aspects are interconnected with and interdependent upon each other. Sustainable Development requires the ability to see the world as a system that connects all activity across space and time. No longer can societies focus only on economic growth, without acknowledging the impact it may have on the environment, which cuts across space such as air pollution, and the inequities that may occur that involve various groups and future generations. All three must be taken into consideration in virtually every aspect of human life. The understanding of the complexity and dynamic set of interactive systems is just one of the knowledges we must acquire (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). This requires an unconditional transformation with regard to how people, businesses and governments think about their daily decisions and actions, specifically their economic choices and the potential impact they have on the natural world, both human and non-human (Sipos et al, 2008). In order for these three components to be achieved, significant changes would have to occur, the most obvious and accessible approach would be through education.

*The vision of Education for Sustainability*

Education became a focus in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio, and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) presented Agenda 21: “A programme of action for sustainable development worldwide” (UNCED, 1992 p. 3). Within the document, a specific segment identified the need for “education” to become
an essential aspect in sustainable development. The three program areas or *thrusts* it called for include:

(a) Reorienting existing education to address sustainable development.

(b) Increasing public understanding and awareness of sustainability.

(c) Promoting training (UNESCO, 2003).

The objectives for reorienting existing education included universal access to education, the attainment on a world-wide scale of environmental and development awareness in all sectors of society, the linking of environmental and development education to social education at all levels of education, and the promotion of integration efforts in all educational programs, specifically: “the analysis of the causes of major environment and development issues in a local context” (Chapter 36, 36.4d).

The goal of such reorientation was an aspiration for broad public awareness of such a restructuring as an essential component in global educational efforts to support and empower local efforts and responsibility for enhancing attitudes, values and actions, which promote sustainability principles. The final strategy called for the creation of and access to vocational training programs that meet environmental and development needs for all members of society. This includes the creation of a workforce equipped to handle and adjust to the move towards creating a sustainable society. Ensuring the local, regional and national capacity to research and develop new technologies conducive to both environmental and social needs and lastly, to address all management levels and areas efforts to integrate both environmental and *human ecological* considerations.
In sum, Agenda 21 stated:

Education, including formal education, public awareness and training, should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues…. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making (UNCED, 1992, p. 264).

The overall aim of ESD is: “to empower citizens to act for positive environmental and social change, implying a participatory and action-oriented approach” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 1).

**Overview of the history of ESD**

Soon after the RIO Summit, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) appointed UNESCO as the task manager for the education sector of the document. Their role was to provide professional and technical support as well as to begin immediate efforts to promote education reforms on an international scale (UNESCO, 2003). With the official recognition that education would be one of the key factors in the move towards sustainable development, an international effort initiated by a variety of organizations, mostly non-educational (grassroot, NGOs, governmental, business), would begin formulating and shaping what elements would be necessary to help students of all ages move toward recognizing and pursuing a sustainable lifestyle (McKeown, 2002). Individual countries would begin setting up commissions, councils and panels that would seek to establish guidelines, goals and policies that would set them on the path towards
achieving sustainable development, with education as a main focus. In 1993, during President Clinton’s term, the Presidents’ Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD) was established and a set of ten focus areas and national goals were identified. They included: “Health And The Environment, Economic Prosperity, Equity, Conservation Of Nature, Stewardship, Sustainable Communities, Civic Engagement, Population stabilization, International Responsibility and Education for all” (PCD, 1994, Overview). The interdependence of these goals reinforces the council’s recognition of the crucial importance to include economic, environmental and social equity considerations with regard to current and future decision-making. These goals are clear in their aims to work toward enabling the United States to actualize the creation of a sustainable society through education. Though these policy recommendations were put forth by the council, there was minimal effort by the administration and congress to implement them (Dernbach, 2002). The Council no longer exists, though as Dernbach (2002) emphasized, the need has not lessened and the US should continue to move towards the coordination of implementation efforts, both within the national government, and the public and private sectors. The USDA’s Office of the Chief Economist has created a position, the Director of Sustainable Development who has been charged with “advancing the principles and goals of sustainable development through partnerships, collaboration, and outreach” in the domain of agriculture (USDA/OCE, Sustainable Development, 2009).

The U.S. Partnership for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development was created as a non-partisan group of stakeholders from a variety of sources, including: government, business, formal education, youth, and faith communities. Their vision is: “Sustainable development fully integrated into education and learning in the United
States” (USPESD, 2008). It has created National Sustainability Education Standards, though currently there is no mandate for implementation within the US formal education system.

In 1998, England established the Sustainable Development Education Panel to examine issues related to ESD. They worked for five years and in 2003, documents, such as the Government’s sustainable development action plan for the education sector, were forwarded to the Sustainable Schools initiative, which continues to provide information and guidance (SORTED, 2009). Other countries such as Australia and South Africa have initiated efforts and are continuing to work toward the education for sustainable development goals set forth by Agenda 21. The consensus into the new millennium was a concern for the overall international movement toward ESD, some progress was occurring however, there were too many gaps in the reorientation of education on a global scale (McKeown, 2002; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; Selby, 2006). World leaders reconvened in September 2004 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and proposed the creation of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) 2005-2014. David Selby (2006) summarized the underlying values for ESD that UNESCO would be mandated to incorporate with “respect” as its founding value:

* Respect for the dignity and human rights of all people throughout the world and a commitment to social and economic justice for all.
* Respect for human rights of future generations and a commitment to intergenerational responsibility.
* Respect and care for the greater community of life in all its diversity, which involves the protection and restoration of the Earth’s ecosystems.
*Respect for cultural diversity and commitment to build locally and globally a culture of tolerance, non-violence and peace. (Selby, 2006, p. 352; Pigozzi, 2007)

It is important to note that the emphasis on environmental and social equity was recognized as being as valuable as the development/economic aspect of educating for sustainability.

**The implementation of ESD**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) would go beyond making recommendations and create an Implementation Scheme that would advocate for partnerships and stakeholder inclusion to better ensure successful implementation of the DESD goals. The recognition of the complexity demanded by DESD’s goals by UNESCO allowed them to identify specific challenges that would need to be met for the Decade to experience progress towards sustainable development. Some of these challenges include:

* Strengthening institutional capacity building and professional development processes for improved planning and implementation of education for sustainable development.
* Increasing monitoring, evaluation and reporting of sustainable development education initiatives and their outcomes and impacts.
* Increasing attention to the sustainability of initiatives so that policies, programmes and activities are embedded in long-term education plans and financial arrangements. (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005, p. 14)

Assessments along the way and upon completion will determine what changes need to be made and what steps to take next. They will be important to determine if transformative
shifts have been made in the behavior of individuals, businesses and governments toward sustainability. As mentioned in an earlier footnote, ESD has evolved into a number of parallel approaches and names, such as Education for Sustainability (EFS), Sustainability Education (SE) and Schooling for Sustainability. For this research study I have chosen to primarily employ the first two, EfS and SE, though references to ESD continue to be used since the original framework was built upon it.

The fundamental principles of ESD/EfS/SE

...we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as with our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. (Earth Charter, Corcoran, 2004, p. 110)

Well-being of humans and the environment

The over-arching goal of sustainable development is to increase human well-being while reducing negative impacts on the environment. Underlying this goal are multiple objectives that will facilitate the sustainability movement. Susan Santone (2003) suggested that in to achieve this goal “democratize institutions, eliminate the exploitation of people and the environment, and achieve a more equitable distribution of resources and power” (p. 2). Since it appears education is the most obvious and viable pathway to achieve these goals, there is a multitude of principles associated with education for sustainability. The goal within education for sustainability is attaining the ability to synthesize and apply the values, principles, perspectives, expectations, skills, concepts,
knowledge, fundamentals, etc. related to sustainability. The literature that addresses these simultaneously overlaps and broadens the scope of this movement, with each author contributing their own perspective about how education for sustainability should be approached, at the same time supporting and reinforcing the perspectives that they have gained from other authors/sources (McKeown, 2002, 2005, 2007; Huckle, 2004, 2005, 2008; Kaivola & Cabral, 2004; Houser, 2005, 2009; Selby, 1999, 2006; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; Cloud, 2003; Corcoran, 2004; Heimlich, 2007). McKeown (2002) states: “ESD is more than a knowledge base related to environment, economy, and society. It also addresses learning skills, perspectives, and values that guide and motivate people to seek sustainable livelihoods, participate in a democratic society, and live in a sustainable manner” (p. 16). The analysis of these reveals the consistencies among those who research and theorize about what the fundamentals behind ESD include. Though there is much overlap, it is important to note that the variations are relative to the cultural context and education system they are directed toward.

**ESD as Transformative**

One of the underlying and perhaps the most important elements of sustainability education is the expectation that it be transformative. Sipos (2008), describes the opportunity education has to move away from practices that perpetuate the cycle of “unsustainability” (Sterling, 2001; Van Kannel-Ray, 2006) that we currently operate under and reinforce in our education system. We have the opportunity to “transform our pedagogical perspective to teach for sustainability (i.e. social, economic, and ecological justice). This transformation involves moving from an “imposed instructional” to a
“constructive participatory” approach (Sterling, 2001). In order to move beyond reproduction of our social ills, teaching for sustainability requires “transformation to new ways of approaching education and life” (p. 71). The construction of knowledge and its subsequent transformative potential is a mutual and interdependent endeavor that occurs between the teacher, the learner and the world they live in, and it is not something that begins and ends with a student’s formal education experience.

Natural laws and ecological principles

Paramount to educating and working for a sustainable world is an understanding of all the features and parts of the global system. There is a vast amount of knowledge about the complex earth system and its subsystems, which include ecological, biological, weather, and multiple human, social and economic systems (Morse, 2000). Scientists have studied these domains of knowledge by examining the underlying processes common within these dynamic eco-systems in order to “begin to address possible solutions toward living in harmony and balance within this biosphere” (p.114). Everyone cannot realistically attain this level of research and knowledge, however, there are certain ecological principles, natural laws, and concepts that those within sustainability education believe can and should be attained. Cloud (2009) identified some of these as; “the laws of thermodynamics, carrying capacity, energy flows, photosynthesis, materials cycle, material value (value in order), appropriate scale, and biodiversity” (p. 21). Scholars advance that a basic foundational knowledge of the processes natural/environmental sciences and specifically bioregional knowledge is necessary in order for students to begin fully comprehending the interconnectedness of the human and natural world, thus
enabling them to make better decisions with regard to its sustainability. (Orr, 1994; Van-Kannel-Ray, 2006; Cloud, 2009; McKeown, 2002). Sterling (2001) and Orr (1999) discuss the concept of an “ecological view of education” which refers to the “relational” aspects of education, with regard to place and the holistic view that examines the interconnectedness and engagement of “all of the senses” (Orr, 1999, p. 234).

**Whole systems**

Understanding natural/ecological and social systems is not enough to fully comprehend the complex changes required to bring about sustainability. The learner needs to recognize and “see the larger properties of whole systems that emerge from the interaction of individual parts…resisting our tendency to simplify problems and solutions” (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005, p. 32; Lourdel, 2007; Manderson, 2006; Sterling, 2001; McKeown, 2002; Selby, 2006). To recognize the complexity of the interactions that occur within political, cultural, economic, environmental and social systems, and likewise be able to look at the “big picture” of their influences upon each other is a different way of thinking than what we have become accustomed to in the traditional educational paradigm (Huckle, 2004; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). To actively look for connections and relationships will enable the lifelong learner to address the dynamic issues they are confronted with on a daily basis throughout their lives. Along with the ability to consider multiple interconnections within and between systems, the capacity to consider multiple perspectives is equally important during the decision-making process. To be able to truly value and be able to learn from the life experiences of others and… “the ability to work with people who present different perspectives and to synergistically
communicate and cooperate to create shared visions, understandings and policies far richer than anything that could have been achieved alone” (p. 123) are crucial skills necessary for the attainment of a sustainable society (Frederico, Cloud, Byrne & Wheeler, 2003, p.13; McKeown, 2002; Dernbach, 2002).

**Lifelong learning**

Another important element of ESD is the understanding that learning is a dynamic lifelong process that occurs in formal, non-formal, and informal settings (Sterling, 2001; Heimlich, 2007). This realization allows the learner to analyze new information, critically review contradictory information and adjust their decision-making and actions throughout their entire life based on the dynamic context through which they experience the world (Sterling, 2001; Santone, 2003; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; Pigozzi, 2007). Though learning is perpetual there are solid foundations in which the learner should be exposed in order for the learning to be utilized towards the goal of a sustainable lifestyle. These foundations include critical inquiry and reflection, lifelong sense of responsibility for choices and decisions, lateral thinking, linking ideas and concepts, making informed decisions, and flexible behavioral change (Bourne, 2008). Learning does not and cannot cease upon leaving the formal classroom environment. Most of our learning occurs: between and by institutions, organizations and communities. In addition, we simply do not know what we do not know, therefore we must learn *how to learn* and remain open to learning what needs to be taught whenever it may come along (Scott, 2002).
Holistic perspective – Global outlook and Local relevance

Education for sustainability is framed across multiple contexts primarily as a result of a deeper understanding of globalization the effects of which have no geographic boundaries and has fundamentally altered the way we view and experience the world. Globalization is described by Giddens (1990) as the: “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64). Thus these new experiences and perspectives require a holistic reorienting of education that allows for developing the abilities and understandings necessary to be able to effectively deal with the complexity and uncertainty that comes with this scale of interdependency (Cloud, 2009; Huckle, 2003). Examining the interdependence of societies on a global scale requires identifying the connections and perspectives among and between people, communities, organizations and communities (Bourne, 2008). Likewise, addressing global issues requires seeking and understanding multiple cross-cultural perspectives (McKeown & Hopkins, 2002) including the valuation of indigenous knowledge with regard to ecological processes (Tilbury & Cooke, 2005). The goal of creating a global understanding of the interconnectedness in the environmental, social, and economic contexts includes understanding the connections between local and global events.

Seeking out multiple perspectives can often be accomplished through “on the ground” work such as experiential learning. Going out into the community to gain a perspective on what is occurring in a student’s own surroundings enables learners to begin to piece together the impacts on a local, regional and then global scale (McKeown et al, 2002; Cloud, 2002).
Van Kannel-Ray (2006) summarizes Bower’s (2001) view by stating: “Such a community-focused lens can inform a deep and accurate understanding of patterns of thinking that can become the underlying assumptions for curricular content…” (p. 114). The direct interaction between the learner and the community, whether it is through human connections or the natural world, facilitates a sense of responsibility that: “grounds their learning in local phenomena and students’ lived experience” (Smith, 2002, p. 586; Feinstein, 2009). Specifically referred to as “place-based education,” this instructional approach uses the student’s local community as the entry point to teach concepts across the curriculum and “emphasizes hands-on, real-world learning experiences…increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens” (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008, p.7; Sobel, 2004). Recognition of one’s interconnectedness within a local community, lends viability towards making connections in a larger global context as a result of the skills attained through this type of learning.

**Economic influences**

When identifying connections within and between the natural and social world, one of the main focus areas is economics. Scholars have suggested that the economic system is in fact a subsystem of the ecological system (Gutierrez, 2006). Therefore, if learners begin to understand: “how the world works as a physical system and why this understanding is important for their life, they will also know how to make an economy that works” (Orr, 1999, p. 234). From the recognition of the impact of consumer choices
to “life cycle analysis and full-cost accounting to learning that many businesses are now producing a ‘triple bottom line’ report, which details their social and ecological impacts as well as their financial successes” (Frederico et. al, p.13 & 21), students need to have knowledge of what “sustainable economics” entails and the evolving connections to social and natural systems (Cloud, 2009; McKeown, 2002). Educating people about the significance of the economy in relation to both environmental and social factors is essential to understanding the big picture of sustainability and its impact on the quality of life for present and future generations.

Value systems

Sipos (2008) addressed another aspect of ESD by adding: “If our collective goal is a more sustainable present and future, we must manifest, encourage, and impart values that contribute toward that goal” (p. 70). Gaining an understanding and reflecting upon your own values, the values of your society as well as the values held by other societies is an essential aspect of ESD. The imparting of values can be quite contentious due to cultural and contextual factors and the whole sustainability movement is laden with values that are both universal and locally specific. One value system that is advocated for as an ethical framework for education for sustainability is the internationally collaborated upon Earth Charter (McKeown, 2002; Nolet, 2009). Work on the charter began shortly after the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and was finally completed in 2000 as a result of the commitment of tens of thousands of diverse individuals, experts, government and civil leaders, as well as those from indigenous and grassroots communities from all regions of
The four interdependent principles within the charter include:

I. Respect and care for the community of life (Earth)
II. Ecological integrity
III. Social and economic justice
IV. Democracy, nonviolence, and peace (McKeown et al., 2002; Corcoran, 2004)

The first principle was considered the foundation of all principles in the Charter. It challenged humanity to exercise a universal responsibility for all living things, human and non-human, through empathy and compassion; to work toward the creation of socially and economically-just participatory societies; and to ensure intergenerational responsibility. The second principle included actions directed toward the earth system, which included the need to protect and restore, to do no harm with regard to the environment, to protect the regenerative capacity of the Earth, and to further the attainment and sharing of knowledge conducive to environmental sustainability. The third principle focused on humanity’s treatment of itself and called for the elimination of poverty, fair and sustainable human development, gender equality in all human domains, and special attention to those whose voices have been restricted and overlooked. The final principle sought to empower democratic institutions, to infuse all levels of education with what is necessary to live sustainably, foster respect for all living beings, and lastly to foster tolerance, nonviolence and peace (Corcoran, 2007, p.115). Those that championed the ethical principles that the Charter called for suggest that its guiding principles will
provide educators with a foundation for supporting the development of a new kind of citizen.

**Citizenship**

Traditional views of citizenship have placed emphasis on the rights, privileges and responsibilities associated with membership in a particular nation-state (Moodley & Adam, 2004; Banks, 2008). The historically “recent” and widespread recognition of the interconnectedness between people across both space and time, has helped to expand the conceptualization of citizenship to include local, regional and global perspectives (McKeown et al, 2002; Selby, 2006, NCSS, 1994). The three strands of ESD, economic, environmental, and social, cut across national boundaries when issues such as globalization, global climatic change and human rights are considered. Pigozzi (2007) maintains that ESD: “depends on a literate and skilled citizenry and requires caring and informed decision-makers at all levels across all sectors: people capable of making the right choices for a sustainable future” (p. 27). The complexities involved in such a task hinder, but do not prohibit such a goal being realized.

**Current challenges, barriers, recommendations and efforts**

Agenda 21 and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESD) and its task manager, UNESCO, have presented a planetary challenge to nations and their education systems. While many nations appear to have embraced the need to achieve sustainability, progress within the US has been limited (McKeown et al, 2002). Many feel the gap between policy, theory and practice has actually increased over the past twenty years (Stevenson, 2007). Several assessments
over the past twelve years have identified the challenges and barriers associated with implementation within the US. The five general areas include: shared understandings, public awareness, education reorientation, coordination and cooperation, and research (Munson, 1997; McKeown et al, 2002; NSCE, 2003; Feinstein, 2009; UNESCO, 2009).

**Shared understandings and Public awareness**

Despite intense international and national efforts, education for sustainable development (ESD) as an educational movement in the U.S. remains virtually unknown in most of the public and educational sectors. This, according to a report submitted to the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes, is partly the result of “nomenclatural diversity”, for example “education for sustainability is more common in US educational discourse than education for sustainable development” (Feinstein, 2009, p. 2). Also, in many instances, educational efforts that reflect the principles of ESD are not distinguished as such, they are promoted under names such as environmental education or as ESD-relevant projects conducted under approaches such as place-based education, civic education and even in academic fields such as the natural sciences and the social sciences. ESD is both complex and evolving with efforts to create a consensus on a plenary definition occurring on multiple fronts without success (McKeown et al, 2002). This lack of clarification with regard to how ESD is defined and the impact regional, national and local differences have on its meaning has inhibited its growth and implementation. One of the key elements in the development of successful ESD programs involve clearly identified and agreed upon community needs (McKeown et al, 2002). Contextual interpretations are encouraged through the common threads reinforcing
the importance of interconnections between the economic, environmental, social and
cultural dimensions should be reflected in all contexts (UNESCO, 2009).

Another challenge facing the ESD/EfS movement in the U.S. is the lack of public
awareness of its purpose and in many instances its existence, which inhibits the creation
of governmental and societal support (McKeown et al, 2002; UNESCO, 2009), though it
does have broad international recognition as an important pathway for successfully
implementing sustainable development strategies. Similar to one of the issues with its
meaning, the phenomenon of nomenclature diversity poses a problem for general public
awareness (Feinstein, 2009). The terms sustainable and sustainability are somewhat
prolific throughout the mainstream media and marketing vocabulary, thus creating
familiarity with the concept but also perhaps diluting its significance and its connection
to education. Likewise, the ideological contentiousness surrounding the climate change
issue only serves to complicate and hinder the public’s perception of need, which is what
brings about changes in the educational system (McKeown et al, 2000).

Coordination and cooperation

The coordination and cooperation among stakeholders including NGOs,
government agencies (within and among), and the creation of new agencies across
international, regional, national, state and local levels has occurred to some degree
(McKeown et al, 2002; NSCE, 2003; Feinstein, 2009; UNESCO, 2009). However,
periodic strategy reviews are essential to address the evolving issues associated with
educating for sustainability. Sharing responsibility such as developing public budgets for
funding (UNESCO, 2009), developing financial and material resources (McKeown et al,
2002), identifying network connections, and creating and sustaining business and community partnerships (McKeown et al, 2002; NSCE, 2003; Feinstein, 2009) are ongoing challenges and essential to moving ESD forward.

**Education reorientation in teaching and learning**

One of the four primary goals for Educating for Sustainable Development and the entry point for this research study was the second goal, (B) Reorienting existing education to address sustainable development. Currently within the US there is no national mandated agenda, though there are some states, such as Vermont and Washington that have incorporated ESD/EfS standards into their state curriculum standards. Western Washington University offers an Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) Specialty Area Endorsement in their teacher education program (WWU, 2010). On the school and individual course/classroom level efforts have been made to both integrate and redesign the curriculum to include education for sustainability principles and standards (Cloud, 2010). Thus, some progress has been made however, there is much to be done if the Agenda 21 goals are to be realized. One of the earliest concerns regarding implementing EfS into public education centered on an issue that is still debated today. Though many advocate for and support the idea of interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary teaching approaches, the reality (funding, training, time, issues with change) within the US public school system continues to challenge the move toward a more holistic process (Munson, 1997; McKeown et al, 2002; Feinstein, 2009, UNESCO, 2009). Another area of recommendation, which has made significant strides, involves the development of educational networks and resources such as
standards/objectives, curriculum frameworks, and supplemental teaching materials (Feinstein, 2009; NCSE, 2003; UNESCO, 2009). Nonprofit NGOs such as The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education and The US Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development (USPESD) have worked diligently with individuals, organizations, and institutions to create extensive curricular frameworks such as Cloud’s Education for Sustainability and USPESD’s National Education for Sustainability K-12 Student Learning Standards. In addition, USPESD launched K-12 National Associations Network for Sustainability (K-12 NANS) in 2011, which is multidisciplinary and includes educators and administrators (Feinstein, 2009, UNESCO, 2009; USPESD, 2011). Likewise, organizations such as The Cloud Institute and Facing the Future have created and often provide free teaching resources, materials and links.

Even with such efforts, extending EfS into formal, non-formal and informal education realms persists as a serious challenge and recommendations to connect with adjectival educations such as peace education and human rights education as well as “engaging traditional disciplines in a transdisciplinary framework” (McKeown, 2002, p. 32; Feinstein, 2009). Lastly, all assessments indicate the need to reach across all domains to build capacity through in-service and pre-service training as an essential component to facilitating implementation of such an immense yet, crucial educational trend. This, of course, requires the collaboration and coordination to acquire financial support from diverse sources including private, multilateral and bilateral donors and government funding (UNESCO, 2009; McKeown et al, 2002), to ensure that all students are provided with the essential tools, knowledge and opportunities necessary to work toward a healthy, secure and sustainable future.
Research

There is limited research identifying the current scope of the implementation of ESD/EfS within the United States. To date, a body of research that focuses on educational projects that bear the labels of ESD/EfS/SE directly does not exist (Feinstein, 2009). An extensive study was conducted by the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes under the heading of environmental education (EE), reflecting a significant area of perceived overlap between ESD and EE. It should be noted that the title of their report, *ESD in the United States of America*, did not reflect this specific research focus though. There are individual case studies that discuss ESD/EsF/SE implementation such as team teaching, schools within schools, as well as whole school modeling implementation efforts. (Santone, 2003; Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Bowers, 2005). Both UNESCO (2009) and NCSE (2003) advocated for research identifying the needs, practices and societal contributions of ESD/SE, baseline inventories and assessments of programs, as well as identifying factors that both support and hinder current and future development and implementation of ESD/SE. Much has yet to be addressed regarding ESD/SE and factors such as public awareness, key competencies, policy development, contributions to society, behavioral outcomes, funding and educational integration.

Implementation Efforts

Efforts to implement Education for Sustainability principles and practices have in some instances been carried out by devoted teams of educators. An integrated project conducted by Michigan 6th graders required them to work with landscape architects to
map out a designated area, research and make inventories of native plants. These experiential lessons enabled them to apply interviewing and inquiry skills as well as interact with elder community members to gain both social and cultural perspectives in order to create a historical timeline and restore a piece of abandoned city land (Santone, 2003). Upon completion of their research, landscape models, and a budget, the students presented their findings to the city council and organized community members to participate in the beautification project during the City Pride Day. Through the integration of history, life science, research, and analytic skills, math, and design the students actively participated and engaged community members in an effort to make a positive contribution to their local community.

In another qualitative study, Higgs & McMillan (2006) examined how four secondary schools chosen as leaders in the EfS movement, created school cultures that modeled sustainability practices to their students. They identified four school sustainability modeling approaches: individual, facilities and operations, governance, and culture. The following are several examples of such modeling. Teachers modeled behaviors such as reusing, composting, and recycling. Efforts to create green school facilities included a wetland garden and creation of their own energy through solar panels and wind generators. At two of the schools the facilities were completely maintained by the students and faculty. At all of the schools, social equity was modeled through school governance. The schools constructed sustainably-minded school cultures through mission statements advocating environmental and social justice as well traditions such as the school prom, which entailed raiding the theater costume room for “outlandish garb” that modeled non-materialism. Barriers existed in some instances when the school culture was
not perceived as ‘matching’ its sustainability goals, such as students’ refusal to participate in many of the longstanding efforts and traditions associated with the school.

The 2009 report conducted by the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes noted that research emphasis on sustainability education has been sparse, but that it is growing in the Environmental Education and science realms. In this report Feinstein found the EPA as the main federal sponsor of environmental education through capacity building noting the early connections between EE and ESD were found to lack: “any explicit mention of economic development or social equity” (Feinstein, 2009, p.14) focusing mostly on the environmental component. He notes however, documents from the National Environmental Advisory Council that advise the EPA on EE: “suggest the broader idea of sustainability is establishing a foothold in the EPA’s work” (p.15). A Google keyword search finds sustainability terminology is beginning to appear in some state curricula, specifically within the science standards. Examples include Vermont, Michigan, and Washington.

Environmental Education and Sustainability Education

Environmental educators (EE) advocate learners become ecologically literate while ESD proponents push for sustainability literacy all of which appear to lead toward a similar goal by pursuing complementary expectations and principles (Cloud Institute; Forum for the Future, 2004; Tilbury & Cooke, 2005; Selby, 2006). However, they diverge in a number of important areas, which in some cases, has stalled the communication between the proponents of both frameworks (McKeown & Hopkins, 2007). Environmental Education conceptualizes humans as part of nature and
emphasizes nature/environmental study whereas ESD has a more anthropocentric approach that balances the interests of the human and natural world (McKeown, 2007). Another point of difference between the two, depending on the perspective, revolved around the goal of educating “about” something versus “for” something. There is a perspective that many environmental education programs focused more on the less-transformative, solution-seeking goals associated with teaching “about” something, whereas education for sustainability seeks to empower learners with both knowledge and transformational tools (Econation, GreenKiwi, 2009; McKeown, 2005). Though more recently, as noted by Heimlich (2012), there is much EE literature that grounds EE as “in, about and for the environment” (personal communication; UNESCO, 1977). Stevenson (2007) identified scholars who saw the ESD movement away from environmental education as progressive as well as those who found it regressive. Regardless of the stance he noted: “Proponents and critics alike, however, seem to agree implicitly if not explicitly that with sustainable development emphasizing socio-ecological relationships and connections (particularly and not inappropriately on a global scale), the discourse of ESD creates a broader and more complex agenda than environmental education, which is simultaneously more ambitious and more ambiguous” (p. 267).

Late in the writing process a quantitative study did emerge that I felt compelled to include since it was the only one that I had identified, to date, that examined environmental education and social studies. The results of this study by Kumler (2011) focused on the behavioral outcomes of students who participated in a land-use curriculum enacted in both science and social studies contexts. Interestingly, the students who experienced the EE intervention in their science class demonstrated a less diverse
understanding of actions supporting sustainable land use even though the science teachers enacted more civic-based lessons than the social studies teachers. Kumler’s (2011) findings indicated that the: “high school subject in which an EE curriculum was enacted influences student action knowledge outcomes, in spite of science teachers including more civic action portions of the curriculum than social studies teachers” (p.25). It appears that the students were better able to make connections between the content and civic action in the social studies course perhaps due to the more long term and consistent reinforcement of the expectation of civic participation associated with and experienced in the social studies classroom. The implications of this finding indicate purposeful classroom time devoted to creating awareness, providing tools and the opportunity to practice action taking. They are all essential to supporting diverse students’ action taking behaviors in a democratic society.

Finally, many scholars acknowledge that Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development are distinct and not competing paradigms, and that local actions in both are welcomed and necessary and, in addition, a continued divisive debate is futile and damaging (McKeown & Hopkins, 2003; Scheunpflug & Asbrand, 2006).

**Teacher’s Thinking and Decision-Making**

The final section of this literature review discusses some of the factors that influence teachers’ instructional decision-making. In some instances, research that focuses specifically on social studies’ teachers will be explored. All teachers experience various amounts of training and are provided with state and national standards,
curriculum guides as well as institutional mandates with regard to what and how they are to teach their students (van Hover & Yeager, 2007; Grant, 1996; Fickel, 2000; Cornett; 1990). The amount and type of content and the potential methods of delivery are abundant and diverse. In addition to the external influences, every educator has their own perspective based on their knowledge, beliefs and personal theories about what their role and responsibility is in relation to their student’s learning (Powell, 1996; Merryfield, 1998; Boote; 2006). This perspective translates into a “power that teachers wield in their classrooms regarding students' access to knowledge, and by extension their life choices…” (Fickel, 2000, p.360). The teacher as the curricular-instructional gatekeeper was found in Thornton’s early research to revolve around the meaning of, the planning for and the instructional decisions made in social studies (Thornton, 1991). So how do teachers decide what they are going to teach and how they are going to teach it when they create their lessons and then step into their classrooms? This question includes organizational, personal, and policy expectations (Thornton, 2005; Boote, 2006; Fickel, 2000). Also to be considered are the concepts of academic freedom and deliberation, though significantly limited by the emphasis on standardization (Boote, 2006). When such freedom does exist, an educator is allowed the opportunity to choose the depth, breadth and priority of the content to be delivered in their classroom. How do teachers determine what concepts will be emphasized? What will be de-emphasized? A teacher can successfully implement a standardized curriculum and simultaneously introduce new content and emphasize various aspects of the content they are covering, such as human rights, political, traditional and non-traditional perspectives. It is impossible to cover it all, so what stays, what goes, and what is added? Many contend teachers are “‘de facto’
curriculum designers”, “street level bureaucrats” (Lipsky in Boote, 2006, p. 461) and curricular-instructional gatekeepers (Thornton, 1991) who determine what will and will not be covered in their classrooms. Perhaps the most compelling question revolves around why teachers choose to teach particular content and/or in a particular manner. Research conducted by Barton and Levstik (2004) and supported by Thornton (2005) contended that a strong sense of purpose, whatever it may be, was the most influential factor in social studies’ teacher’s content and instructional decision making.

The research literature from the 1980s to today has revealed numerous influences on teacher’s decision-making with regard to content and instructional choices. Review of research in this area encompasses both teacher decision-making in general as well as specifically in the realm of social studies education and other disciplines. Merryfield (1998) noted a paradox between the discrete or specific influences (the what) identified in the social studies literature and the more broadly-based literature about teacher decision making, that Grant (1996) referred to as the “cross-current” or interaction between influences (the how). My review of the literature has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of these influences, their dynamic complexity, and impact upon seemingly already overburdened classroom teachers. I have examined three primary influences on teacher decision-making and thought processes with regard to content and instructional judgments, both in general and in social studies specifically. They include personal, student, and organizational influences; though, it must be noted, the grounded theory approach will allow for other potential influences and/or nuances to emerge. Grant (1996), in his multi-year and multi-participant study, focused on personal, organizational and policy influences and their interactions. He folded students into a layer referred to as
the influence of individuals and groups within an organization. Clearly students are part of the educational organization structure and there is widespread support for their own niche within research literature on teacher decision-making as a whole (Merryfield, 1998; Boote, 2006; Fickel, 2006; Romanowski, 1997).

**The teacher’s personal entourage**

Teacher’s knowledge, beliefs, values, experiences, and personal theories have been identified in most of the research that I reviewed, as being the most important factors in teacher decision-making (Elbaz, 1983; Fickel, 2006; Grant, 1996; Merryfield, 1998, Thompson, 2001; Powell, 1996; Cornett, 1990; von Hover & Yeager, 2007; Evans, 2006; Thornton, 1991, Boote, 2006). Elbaz’s (1983) seminal study set the groundwork for re-conceptualizing the teacher’s role from follower to active designer with regard to enactment of the curriculum (Fickel, 2006). A significant influence affecting teachers’ decision-making are their lived experiences both past and present resulting in the formation of philosophical beliefs (von Hover & Yeager, 2007; Thomson, 2001), for example, as learners themselves (Cornett, 1990; Grant, 1996; Moallem, 1994; Fickel, 2000), interactions with family and other relationships (Grant, 1996; Fickel, 2000), cross-cultural interactions (Merryfield, 1998), formal teacher education training (Fickel, 2000; Grant, 1996; Cornett, 1990, Boote, 2006; Merryfield, 1998), and perceptions of the subject matter they teach (Grant, 1996; Cornett, 1990). These experiences and subsequent beliefs provide a reference point for relating their own experiences to their content and instructional choices. Powell’s (1996) study on contrasting worldviews in relation to cultural relevancy examined how a subjectivist worldview and belief system led toward a
shift in teaching perspectives from “teacher-as-authority” to “teacher-as-facilitator of meaning and negotiator of curriculum” (p. 382). This shift resulted in a more interactional relationship between the teacher and the students. Similarly one’s philosophical stance toward a student-centered or a curriculum-centered approach notably influenced both content and pedagogical selections, as Cornett (1990) and Powell (1996) both discovered in their case study research. The personal choice in the use of reflective practice has also been found to have a significant influence on teacher decision-making, both in lesson preparation and in the moment or reflection-in-action and sense-making (Moallen, 1994; Cornett, 1990; Danielson, 2008; Parker, 1987). Teachers use their reflective practices to make instructional decisions that enable them to become students of their own teaching. Schon’s (1987) work described how these practices are used in classroom planning, making adjustments and the analysis of enacted practices and decision-making. Danielson (2008) extended this line of research by identifying four modes of thinking: technological, situational, deliberate, and dialectical thinking. These modes address self-reflection through routines, context, external information gathering, and transformation.

**Students as Catalysts**

Dewey (1916), in his seminal philosophical stance toward education, recognized early on the role of the student in the educational process, noting the importance for them to become problem solvers through active learning, participation, interest, engagement and individuality. Within the research literature, student characteristics or idiosyncrasies (Boote, 2006) as a factor or influence in teacher decision-making and thinking has
consistently found its way into the instructional discourse (Merryfield, 1998; Evans, 2006; Grant, 1996; Fickel, 2000; Boote, 2006; Romanowski, 1997; Powell, 1996; Parker, 1987). In a study conducted by Grant (1996) and Romanowski (1997): “teachers consistently mentioned students as a key influence in their pedagogical decisions with respect to the content and types of learning activities that they select. The teachers in these studies seem to be influenced by their perceptions of students' intellectual abilities, students' interest in, or possible resistance to, specific content topics, and classroom management concerns” (Fickel, 2000, p. 361). Specifically these perceptions involved developmental level and abilities, individual and collective attributes, backgrounds, behaviors, and student’s interests, questions, abilities and experiences, as Merryfield (1998) and Eley (2006) found in their studies with regard to global content. Students are inundated with headlines, updated tweets, Facebook status updates, groups, family and cultural concerns, etc., all of which expose them to a myriad of events, issues, and causes occurring in their homes, their community, their state, their country, and across the world. Daily they have their questions, interests and concerns both addressed and overlooked by educators at all levels. So why do some educators choose to address these issues and even design their curriculum around such issues and concerns while others do not? A participant in Powell’s (1996) study felt so strongly about understanding the nature of her students, their needs and their interests, both in and out of school, she visited her student’s homes. In doing so, she learned so much about her students that she began taking content and instructional risks in order to enable students to “become connected to the school and engage them in meaningful learning” (p. 376).
Another student as catalyst characteristic identified by Fickel’s (2000) article in which she discussed both Oakes (1985) and Romanowski’s (1997) findings, alluded to how “tracking” factored in to their teaching decisions. This is related to more current perspectives such as differentiation and inclusion approaches that require constant monitoring and are responsive to diverse student needs (King-Sears, 2008). These individual student considerations seem to account for a significant amount of influence in content and instructional decision-making.

Most often in the studies discussing teachers’ reflective practice, the key indicators are feedback resulting from student responses to lessons and/or their success or failure in learning the content (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The concept of cultural relevancy also related to student influence in that the effort to make it relevant is directly connected to the individual and group culture of the student(s) in the teacher’s classroom (Danielson, 2008). Finally, the pedagogical perspective, which values student-centered teaching, though it may be held by the educator, is clearly dependent upon the needs and abilities of the student, thereby reinforcing the panoptic factor of student influence on teacher decision-making.

Organizational forces

Returning to Grant’s (1996) proposed array of instructional influences, he cited an expansive list of researchers and specific features he referred to as “organizational” in nature, such as; “organizational structures”, “cultures”, “nature of bureaucratic work”, “peers”, and “school and district administrators” (p. 249). His study revealed two types of these influences on teacher decision-making, one focuses on groups and individuals
within an organization and the other addresses the organizational “context”, which
includes “norms, structures and resources” (p. 249). Groups and individuals, such as
grade level teams, principals, peers, parents and district administrators can administer
varying amounts of “pressure” on teachers, though it is often intermittent and inconsistent
(Grant, 1996; Boote, 2006). In Grant’s findings he noted the least influential of the
organizational influences appeared to be peers or fellow teaching colleagues. This would
likely vary based upon the organizational norms and structures within the school setting,
such as visible accountability, interdisciplinary emphasis, team, inter/intradepartmental
connectedness and teacher professional communities (Gill & Hoffman, 2010; Curry,
2010; Peneuel, 2009). The other category of organizational influences noted by a number
of researchers involves the contextual aspects of a teacher’s institutional environment
such as hierarchal issues (Evans, 1996), professional discretion levels and challenges
(Boote, 2006), access and use of resources (Fickel, 2006; Evans, 1996), tensions (Evans,
1996), and the broader notions of a school’s and district’s culture (Grant, 1996). Grant
(1996) documented evidence of school norms such as concerns about “inflated” students
grades and traditional versus nontraditional academic missions. Evans (1996) contends
norms within a school are constructed in such a manner that what is stated may not be
what is expected and on an individual basis may not even be what is enacted. He notes
this level of incongruence may be the result of the daily tensions of “hierarchical control”
and a general lack of support for reforms that promote “democratic citizenship” (p. 429).
Boote’s (2006) discussion about professional discretion recognizes the challenge to
organizational norms and practices as teachers increase their capacity to practice
professional discretion. That is, the more skilled an educator is with regard to curricular
decision-making the less likely they are to be influenced by the norms and culture of an educational setting. Organizational structures and methods of operation, such as scheduling, tracking, socioeconomic composition, teaming, population, professional development, teacher collaboration support and school decision-making, all serve as influences on teacher decision-making, both content and pedagogical (Grant, 1996; Fickel, 2006; Evans, 1996; Thornton, 1991). Regarding access to and type of resources, the findings indicate there is a range of influences, from less often than one might think (Grant, 1996) to their importance in increasing student achievement and involvement (Merryfield, 1998) to their vital role and accessibility based upon an educator’s innovative professional discretion (Boote, 2006). Specific to social studies instruction, the use of supplemental resources such as newspapers, the television news and community resource people (Merryfield, 1998) as well as access to computers and internet connections (Grant, 2006) provide enrichment, current and alternative, and diverse perspectives to a traditional textbook (Merryfield, 1998; Evans, 1996; Grant, 2006; Powell, 1996).

**Policy influences**

Similar to the previously discussed influences, policy concerns have realized a considerable amount of exposure in the general literature on teaching. These influences range from state-mandated accountability, state standards, and reform movements to more specific factors such as curriculum frameworks, tests, and textbooks (Grant, 1996; Fickel, 2000: Boote, 2006; Porter, 1989; Louis et al, 2005). There is a dichotomous relationship with regard to policy creation and teacher decision-making. This is
illustrated by the increase in findings that recognize 1) the movement toward autonomy pertaining to the ability of teachers to use appropriate and informed discretion and mediation with regard to curriculum and instructional choices (Boote, 2006; Grant, 1996; Parker, 1987) and 2) the simultaneous increase in curricular and assessment standardization (Boote, 2006; Grant, 1996; Louis et. al, 2005), which appears to many as a means to remove the opportunity for individual teacher discretion. Viewing policy influences as either constraints or opportunities has also been addressed in the research literature and is dependent upon factors such as teaching experience (Boote, 2006), stage of policy implementation, sense-making implications (Louis et al, 2005), guidance and direction potential (Grant, 1996; Louis et al, 2005), and teacher participation in standard setting (Porter, 1989).

The specific policy factor of assessment and testing pushes educators in several different ways according to the study being examined. Fickel (2000) noted her participant was more likely to be influenced by NCSS standards and goals than the mandated standards associated with the state assessment. In fact, the approach reflected a both/and process rather than an either/or dilemma “by both preparing them [his students] to be successful on the state test and to be thoughtful citizens with choices in life” (p. 383; NCSS). Grant (1996) found the state assessment was a main factor of consideration in unit planning and daily instruction. Likewise, some of Merryfield’s (1998) participants’ instruction was heavily influenced by the state test. Most recently, Louis et al’s (2005) research indicated a wide range of teacher reactions from positive, with only slight concerns to fear of negative effects on the overall quality of “teaching and learning in the school” (p. 197) as a result of testing. Curriculum frameworks mandated by local
schools, districts, states and even at the national level have varying degrees of influence with the school and district curricula carrying the most influence (Grant, 1996; Louis et al, 2005). Merryfield (1998), Louis et al (2005) and Porter (1989) all discussed teacher participation in the creation or revising of the curriculum and/or course of study for their schools and districts, lending to, in the case of Merryfield, the inclusion of global education theory. This participation served to create content connections, purpose, and to illustrate the value of the professional educator’s authority and discretion with regard to teacher-as-gatekeeper (Thornton, 2006; Grant, 1996; Boote, 2006). Specific to the state of Ohio, students are currently required to pass the OGT, Ohio Graduation Test. The citizenship portion of the assessment is aligned with Ohio’s Academic Content Standards, along with the reading, mathematics, science and writing sections. The OGT was established in response to educational reform efforts to create an “aligned system of standards, assessments, and accountability for Ohio schools” (ODE, 2009, p. 1). The participants in my study were all Ohio social studies’ educators; therefore, the potential influence of this assessment with regard to their curricular decision-making was noted.

**Conclusion**

What is more relevant and parallels the complexity of educating for a sustainable future is the negotiation and interaction between all of the influences discussed in the above literature review. Grant (1996) specifically addressed this manifestation as *cross-current* influences, while Boote (2006) refers to varying levels of *professional discretion*. These levels are attained once an educator has begun to master and appreciate the dynamic complexity of the system of influences impinging upon social studies educators.
as they face the day to day challenges of deciding what to include, what not to include, what to emphasize, what not to emphasize, what to alter, etc., with regard to their content and instructional choices. Likewise, are the dynamic complexities of forces that influence our daily decisions as humans with regard to the choices that we make. These choices will impact every aspect of our social and natural world.
Chapter Three – Methodology and Rationale

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social studies’ teacher’s conceptualizations and classroom practices, and the recently emerging educating for sustainability framework. This chapter discusses the means through which I approached fulfilling this purpose.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research design

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described how quantitative and qualitative researchers in their research styles are: “Doing the same things differently” (p. 9). They identified five points of difference as: “different ways of addressing the same set of issues” (p.9). First, both were molded out of the positivist (objective truth) and post-positivist (only partially objective truth) legacies, with the latter progressively distancing itself from the former. Qualitative research has continued to distance itself from the idea of an objective truth and toward the idea of subjective reality. Secondly, quantitative methods are just one objective perspective in telling the stories of the natural and social world, whereas qualitative methods seek more prolific, subjective sources, which will generally honor hidden voices. I believed the subjective voices of the participants would provide nuances in conceptualizing and practicing their discipline of choice: social studies. These nuances,
in turn would provide both depth and breadth, not attainable through a quantitative paradigm. This led into the third point of difference, which reflected the individual’s point of view as valued and sought by both, though qualitative researchers believe they are able to get closer and deeper through their less remote strategies. Meeting with and observing the participants on multiple occasions in both one-on-one and group (classroom) settings allowed me to identify instances of both consistency and inconsistency, which added cogency to the reconstruction of their point of view during the comparative analysis stage of the study. Fourth, though both may seek to shed light upon everyday life, it is the qualitative researcher’s goal to “confront and come up against the constraints of the everyday world” (p. 10), whereas, quantitative researchers distance themselves from the social world and are more indirect in their studies. Once more, I believed multiple and quality interactions might lead to the discovery of embedded concepts and practices, unattainable through the less sensitive methodological tools associated with quantitative research. Lastly, the quest for rich descriptions rather than the development of generalizations distinguishes qualitative researchers as valuing the details of the social world rather than confounding the generalizations about it. That is, quantitative researchers seek to use a value neutral framework to measure and analyze the “causal relationships between variables” (p. 8). Qualitative researchers “study things in their natural (social) settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). Finally, my personal cognizance of the near impossibility of a “value neutral” framework when inquiring into human thoughts and actions as well as the investigation into an educational construct virtually unknown to the participants in the study led me to employ a qualitative
research design. Since the “meaning” of sustainability and the actualization of sustainability education is itself a phenomenon, it required a close examination of the natural world of the social studies classroom teacher.

**Development of my methodological positionality**

Throughout my post-graduate education experience, I was informed and reminded on multiple occasions that I must know, before choosing the research paradigm through which my research would be conducted, the research question/problem beforehand. As such, my original research question was structured to warrant the use of a quantitative research paradigm. I struggled with this direction, as I learned more about the depth, the interwoven complexities, and the interactional concepts of a more qualitative research paradigm, such as relationships, reciprocity, reflexivity, lived experience, interpretation, making of meaning, empowerment. I began to sense this paradigm could address my research questions as well as fit my personal worldview with regard to discovering knowledge. I was drawn to a qualitative view involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Glesne (2006), validated my intrinsic desire by stating: “the research methods with which you feel most comfortable say something about your views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and your perspective on the nature of reality; and you are attracted to and shape research problems that match your personal view of seeing and understanding the world” (p. 5). Her perspective resonated with the “pull” I was feeling towards a more qualitative approach, which in turn would impact the articulation of my research problem and formation of my questions. Upon much reflection and theoretical analyzing I was able to identify a
problem which connected many of my passions and questions, the content and substance of which was also supported by one of the best known rationales for qualitative research, the assertion that it is conducive to conduct in areas where little is known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The literature reviews in Chapters One and Two both recognize that there is very little if any research addressing the relationship between sustainability education, social studies curricula and social studies teachers. The research questions were designed to complement my nature of reality lens and fill a notable gap in the educational research literature. Both intuitively and scholarly, I discovered mounting evidence and spaces, which would support my qualitative research decision. In situating the methodological framework for this study, I soon recognized my own sense of meaning creation. By reviewing research paradigms and discussing issues with peers and professors, I began “constructing” a framework based upon the needs and goals of my research questions and myself as a researcher. This creation also discussed as multiple, crosscutting justifications for the kinds of work researchers do, is not uncommon in the post-positivist world (Lincoln, 2001). What did this all mean to me? How could it be applied to the research questions that I was seeking to address? What fit and what needed to be modified, borrowed and justified? Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) application of the term bricoleur, as the “jack of all trades or maker of quilts” (p.4), can be suitably applied to the process through which “if new tools or techniques have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this” (p.4).
**Constructivist Inquiry**

The constructivist paradigm “assumes a relativist ontology (that there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35). Knowledge is made, not discovered, therefore, meaning within the world around us can only be realized through our construction of it and understood by recognizing there are multiple perspectives of its reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) first addressed this paradigm as naturalistic inquiry, as evidenced by the same titled book, but later they would begin to characterize it as constructivism (Schwandt, 1994). The constructed reality discussed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), in which the view that “reality doesn’t exist until it is constructed by an actor or created by a participant” (p. 87), leads naturally toward an inquiry in which the central focus is on the participant and the focus of the researcher is to make sense and organize them through the construction of meaning. Constructivist inquiry begins with the issues or concerns of the participants and "...through a dialectic of iteration, analysis, critique, reiteration, reanalysis, it leads eventually to a joint (among inquirer and respondents) construction of a case (i.e., findings or outcomes)" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 243). One of the basic tenets of constructivism is the building or creating of knowledge. We are not passive in our gaining of knowledge, we in fact construct it out of our experiences, often inventing “concepts, models, and schemes, to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experiences” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197) This framework supported the goals of this study by recognizing the potential that social studies educators are including sustainability concepts and principles in their classrooms,
though most likely without purposeful intent. They are constructing their understanding of their selected content and its significance, therefore, inventing or creating the terminology, understanding and instructional choices as they fit their experiences and interpretations. They may be unknowingly conceptualizing and addressing sustainability, though at the same time they are purposefully constructing their own version or perspective by which to emphasize and include it in their instructional and content choices.

Gergen (1985), discussed social constructionism as, “relying on the assumption that the terms by which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically-situated interchanges among people” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 127). On a much larger scale than the classroom and the individual educator, the conceptualization of social studies as a discipline has been constructed based upon the goals, experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of those observing and living in the social and natural world, using the lens of the past, present, and future. Evidence of this lies in the acknowledgement of social studies as a discipline experiencing a turbulent history (Ross, 2006) with regard to its definition, purpose and place. Sustainability education researchers have researched, reviewed, and constructed what it is they perceive as necessary for creating a sustainable world, I believe it is then reasonable and researchable to examine the possibility of one construction lying embedded within the other. The social constructivist approach also asserts meaning making and relies on the “collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 127). This study will employ both social constructivist and social constructionism perspectives by examining meaning making by the individual social
studies educator, the potential co-construction of knowledge by the researcher, and
participant and finally by examining the social construction of social studies in relation to
educating for a sustainable future.

**Grounded Theory Foundation**

This study was designed to focus on the potential intersections between the social
studies curricula and sustainability education; specifically, it explored the
conceptualization of social studies by secondary social studies’ educators and their
subsequent enacted classroom practices. Through an extensive review of the literature,
very little was found that examined the concepts of social studies and sustainability and
their potential areas/spaces of intersection. Though, on a daily basis, new perspectives
and articles are appearing, and a thorough revisiting of the literature will be necessary
and is expected. The relatively recent pervasive influence of the concept of *sustainability*
itself lends this observation to be reasonable and worthy of further pursuit. How social
studies’ educators conceptualize their craft has been examined and reviewed by many,
though not through the lens of sustainability. This study explored the conceptualizations
of social studies educators in relation to their content and methodological choices and
sought to uncover what may have existed all along. I suspected there were traces and
evidence of inherent elements that lend themselves to being built upon as a legitimate
foundation for teaching and transforming students to become active contributors towards
creating a sustainable future for themselves and generations to come. The complexities
involved in teacher’s content and methodological choices, both conceptual and lived,
likewise the newness of and the complexities within sustainability education, lend
themselves to the use of grounded theory as a viable methodological research option. The early development of grounded theory by Strauss and Glaser and their first published book: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967)*, was revolutionary and counter to the positivistic approaches popular at the time (Corbin & Holt, in Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The crucial point of departure was the emphasis for “researchers to go out into the field and to ground their theories in actual data” as opposed to the traditional “armchair theorizing and positivistic approaches so popular at the time” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 50). The main goal of grounded theory is to develop “theory from data obtained from systematic social research” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2). The basic assumption behind it states: “grounded theory methods consist of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain collected data” while assuming an objective external reality (Charmaz in Denzin & Lincoln (2000) p. 509). This stance, though first conceptualized as contentious towards positivism, in fact is now considered closest to it in the qualitative research spectrum of methodologies (Charmaz, 2000, 2006). This is where another departure occurs.

Glaser’s systematic guidelines of: “direct and narrow empiricism” (Charmaz, 2006, p 8) and an emergent view of an embedded theory within the data with the data as the only source of the emerging theory, brought about a challenge by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Their movement towards post-positivism was a result of their acknowledgement of the conflicting views of reality between the researcher and the participants, their interest in verification and the use of a variety of analytical tools (Corbin & Holt, 2005). The recognition of this conflict would prompt them to “propose giving voice to their respondents and representing them as accurately as possible” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510).
This approach to data collection and analysis represents the perceptions, issues, and experiences of importance to the participants, in this case social studies and the ubiquitous concept of sustainability. The analysis of collected data by the use of constant comparison, coding, and a variety of other technical procedures and data collection methods enabled me to ground the theory development in the experiences of the participants. The experiences of the participants in this study included conceptualizations of SS and practices, decision-making practices and the daily enacted experiences in the social studies’ classroom. Though the development of theory is the main goal of grounded theory, what is utilized to create the theory diverges from strictly data-bound to a situationally-relevant context in which the theory is actually constructed. This is where the most recent departure occurs, between Glaser’s (1992) objectivist emphasis on external reality and Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) still behaviorist yet more flexible interpretivist view of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000). Glaser, in response to Strauss and Corbin’s new direction, would reemphasize in his book: *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, his perspective on theory as “inherently embedded in the data and it is the task of the analyst to discover what the theory is” (Corbin & Holt, 2005, p. 49). His emphasis on *one reality or one truth* being nested and subsequently emerging from the data as a result of strict explicit analytic procedures was not accepted as the only viable pathway to developing new theories (Charmaz, 2006), and this would be partly due to the apperception of multiple perspectives and influences that occur within a research setting and life itself. In this study, these perspectives provided an opportunity for verification, flexibility, the use of a variety of analytic tools, and the recognition of “multiple realities or multiple ways of interpreting a specific set of data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Corbin &
Holt, 2005; Charmaz, 2006). This approach moves away from positivism as it honors and represents the voice of the participants as accurately as possible, while recognizing the complex views of the participants and myself.

**Constructivist Grounded Theory**

Charmaz (2000) moved the discussion to the next level by adding another stance to the framework and methodology, the inclusion of a constructivist lens. Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes: “how data, analysis, and methodological strategies become constructed, and takes into account the research contexts and researchers’ positions, perspectives, priorities and interactions” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p.10). She acknowledged the evolution of Strauss and Corbin’s process towards a more interpretivist stance, yet points out their persistent positivist underpinnings through a continued position which embraces an “objective external reality, aims toward unbiased data collection, proposes a set of technical procedures and espouses verification” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510). The differences may be more nuanced than obvious since many researchers are pointing out that they are more similar than different (Mills et al, 2006) for example, their statement claiming their ‘aims toward unbiased data collection’ (Charmaz, 2000), can be countered by one of their earlier statements: “we emphasize that it is not possible to be completely free of bias” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 97). Still, Charmaz (2000) contends that Glaser, Strauss and Corbin “assume an external reality that their findings as distanced experts, keeps them more in the objectivist, positivistic realm” (p. 511).
The constructivist approach to grounded theory put forward by Charmaz and employed in this study, combines the analytic framework building strategies of grounded theory with the heterogeneous and dynamic mix of meaningful social realities and co-construction of knowledge by the researcher and participants. Thus, it allowed for deeper interactional opportunities between the participants and I. “Using flexible, heuristic strategies, rather than fixed procedures, Constructivist Grounded Theory emphasizes action, process, meaning, and emergence within symbolic interactionism, pragmatically accepting an array of sensitizing concepts from other perspectives” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 513). Knowledge was constructed in relation to the shared understandings, practices, and language between the participants and I. My experiences as a social studies teacher as well as a student teaching supervisor and researcher working both with and alongside all of the participants allowed the above shared realities to become a transparent part of the research process. The evaluation of this study with regard to where I began, the process I experienced, my endpoint, and most importantly the journey throughout, was guided by a reflective journey back through the process in order to develop a sense of clarity for myself as well as my audience. The evaluative criteria for Constructivist Grounded Theory methods offered by Charmaz (2006) includes the following:

Credibility:
Has my research achieved intimate familiarity with the topic?
Did I employ systematic comparisons between observations and criteria?
Is there sufficient grounding of the claims in my data?
Are there logical links between my data and my argument and analysis?
**Originality:**
Are there new insights or conceptual renderings of the phenomena I studied?
Is there social and theoretical significance in my work?
Does my work refine, challenge, or extend current ideas, concepts and practices?

**Resonance:**
Is there a portrayal of the fullness of the studied experience?
Have I revealed or discussed “liminal or unstable taken for granted” meanings?
Have links been drawn between larger collectivities and individuals?
Do my interpretations make sense to my participants or members of this population?

**Usefulness:**
Can this analysis provide interpretations that people can use in their everyday world?
Are there any generic processes within the categories?
Does my analysis spark further research in related areas?
Does my work contribute to knowledge and making a better world? (p 182)

The evaluative criteria proposed by Charmaz, may or may not have been met and in some instances it will be a matter of varying degrees. She notes that few grounded theorists address how their studies meet evaluative standards, mostly focusing on the logic of their decisions and the achievement of theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006). I can say I have strived to meet the criteria that she has offered and will address to what extent in the concluding chapters of this work. The remainder of this chapter will focus upon the specific methods that I employed as I navigated my way through this dynamic and complex research process.
Research Design and Methods

Participant Selection

The procedure for selecting the participants for this research was purposeful and focused (Patton, 2002). Recognizing, through my personal interactive experiences in my own and other’s social studies classrooms and my extensive literature research, the concept of sustainability education had not been conceptualized by the majority of the population in general, I was not sure how many current social studies educators would be familiar with and/or practicing the framework. This factor and the decision to follow a grounded theory approach resulted in the following participant selection process.

According to Glaser and Strauss in their book: The Discovery of Grounded Theory, with regard to sampling, the grounded theory methodological approach is less concerned with population representativeness and more focused upon sampling directed toward theory construction (Charmaz, 2006). The sampling process with regard to participant selection is more about finding relevant materials, in this case social studies teachers and classrooms, to establish the initial “point of departure” (Charmaz, 2006, p.100). This was interpreted as referring to the initial study participants and the subsequent “sampling”, or more aptly “re-sampling” of the same population of participants based upon the “seeking of pertinent data to develop your emerging theory” (p. 96). The generation of criterion for this part of the process was based upon identifying secondary social studies educators who were also considered global educators. The decision to focus upon global educators derived from what I perceived as the most likely population to include a broader perspective, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of a relationship between social
studies and sustainability education. The purposeful selection of social studies teachers who were recognized by their peers as global educators homogenized the sample, if only a little. Using a snowball sampling strategy (Patton, 2002), teacher education professors and field supervisors were asked to identify viable candidates who met the following criteria:

- must be a secondary social studies educator
- must be recognized by recommendation as “global educators”
- must have at least one year of teaching experience
- must be available and teaching from May 2010 to June 2011
- may or may not be familiar with the concept of “sustainability”
- may be of any race, religion or ethnicity
- may be from an urban, rural and/or suburban district from the Greater Midwestern City region
- may be from a public, private and/or alternative school setting

This process led to the discovery of the research participants through the university social studies program. It should be noted that this strategy inadvertently limited the diversity of the participants due to the reality of a lack of diversity throughout the university’s teacher education program. Through this purposeful snowball nomination process twelve candidates were identified and sent an informal email describing the study’s goals, expectations and requesting if they would be interested in participating. Upon review of the nominated participants it became apparent that I was familiar with a number of them as a result of my experiences as a student teaching supervisor and graduate student researcher. This may have been a result of the global educator criterion as well as the choice of nominators, most of which were affiliated in some manner with
the teacher education program. Shortly after receiving this letter, five of them agreed to meet with me to discuss their participation. The five who responded all had previous interactions and experiences with me as a university supervisor, thus a relationship with these candidates had already been established. Prior to them officially volunteering to participate I met with each candidate and reviewed the letter of consent (Appendix E), which revisited the details and procedures of the study and requested their signature. I recognize that those previous experiences had allowed me to gain unrealized access into a variety of social studies’ classrooms as a colleague, learner and observer. Initially I struggled and felt apprehensive with this previously established connection to the participants. I was concerned about whether it was appropriate. The consideration that this was an exploratory study, in the sense that there were little to no previous studies or literature addressing this topic and recognizing that the goal was rich descriptions rather than generalizability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). After much reflection, peer discussion, and review of the relevant literature I concluded that the nominated participants met the established criteria necessary to include in my study. By providing full transparency of the nature of my previous experiences with the participants, this factor would become a characteristic of my study. It appears my relational ontology position drew me toward those with whom I was most familiar. I also concluded it was better that I knew all of them rather than just a few, likewise I felt strongly that a sense of trust had already been cultivated between the participants and myself as a result of our previous interactions, which augmented the shared understandings, practices and language essential to the constructed meanings achieved as a result of the collaboration between the teachers and myself. From a practical standpoint, the previously established relationships with these
candidates facilitated my access to gaining permission from the school administrators to conduct the research in their schools. That is, the familiarity that I had with the schools, both logistically and administratively, and vice versa may have created or supported a sense of trust with regard to working with their faculty and in their school’s classrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Marie</th>
<th>Elizabeth</th>
<th>Taylor</th>
<th>Bert</th>
<th>Ernie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Name Pseudonym</td>
<td>Carson High School</td>
<td>Carson High School</td>
<td>Zimmerman High School</td>
<td>Humboldt Academy</td>
<td>Humboldt Academy</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years teaching</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Setting Experiences Current</td>
<td>Suburban, Urban, Vocational</td>
<td>Suburban Urban</td>
<td>Suburban Rural, Urban - substitute</td>
<td>Multi-distric drawing from urban, suburban and rural</td>
<td>Rural, Urban, Multi-distric drawing from urban, suburban and rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite Subject in School</td>
<td>Math then Social Studies</td>
<td>US History, English (reading and writing)</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Social Studies and Hard Sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other career pursuits or interests</td>
<td>Politics, Completed law school, Computers</td>
<td>Helping profession – Vet, Dietician Pharmacist,</td>
<td>Intervention specialist – initial choice</td>
<td>Government Investigator</td>
<td>Naturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Setting</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Multi-district</td>
<td>Multi-district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level(s)</td>
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<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;-12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Participant Demographics
Gaining Access

The process through which I gained access to the research sites associated with the selected participants involved several steps. Glesne (2006), described this process as an “acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, and talk to whomever you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require, and do all of this for whatever period of time you need to satisfy your research purposes.” Therefore, access to the research field can vary significantly depending upon the kind of research being performed and in this case I was able to provide the essential parameters for them to allow me to proceed (p. 44).

The approval process began by submitting and obtaining approval from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) from the Midwestern university through which this research was conducted (Appendix A). Upon approval, I began the process to identify potential candidates for the study, as previously described. Once the participants had expressed an interest in participating in the research project I set out to negotiate access to the three secondary school sites at which the participants were teachers. My first task was to meet with each of the school’s gatekeepers, which I believed to be their school principal, to inform them about my research objectives and parameters and to acquire their consent to conduct my research study in their school with their teacher(s). Each meeting with the school principal provided an opportunity for me to describe the purpose of my research and why I had chosen to work with one or two of their teachers. In one instance, after I had met with the principal and obtained his permission, I received notification from the school board office that I had not followed the proper research protocol established between the university and the school district. I
became concerned that I had failed in achieving a level of trust with the school principal, fearing he might doubt my qualifications to conduct research in his school with his teachers. The principal of the school as well as the principal investigator were both unaware of the previously-established protocol, as a result, the school principal was very understanding and acknowledged that every day was a learning process. This issue was relatively easily resolved after I submitted the proper paperwork to the school district’s Board of Education office and received an official letter and email citing I was permitted to proceed with my study. Upon the conclusion of the other two meetings I followed up with a formal letter (Appendix F) to each of the participants and provided a copy for each of their principals.

**Analytic Strategies - Data Sources and Collection**

This study examined both teacher conceptualizations of social studies and their teaching practices in order to identify/analyze the conceptual relationships between social studies and sustainability education. My aim was to uncover what was situated within the perceived and observed social studies content and practices and then to examine these findings, through comparative analysis, and their relationship to the sustainability education framework. In order to increase the likelihood of both credibility and resonance (Charmaz, 2006), multiple data collection methods and sites were employed to provide a larger amount of dense data. Doing so also increased the trustworthiness of the data, which is referred to as triangulation (Glesne, 2006; Lather, 1986). Careful consideration of the data-collection methods was achieved in order to ensure that the techniques chosen provided the rich data necessary to address the phenomena being studied and to provide
different perspectives (Glesne, 2006). The specific data-collection methods I employed included interviews, semi-structured and informal; theoretical sampling, participant classroom observation, document analysis and reflexive journaling.

**Interviews**

The interview process employed in this study consisted of a total of 18 digitally-recorded interviews with the five participants. All of them were interviewed at least twice and four were interviewed a total of four times. Three of the interviews were conducted between April 2010 - June 2010, the final interview for four of the participants occurred in December 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>4/27/10 after school</td>
<td>5/19/10 before school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>4/26/10 7th period</td>
<td>5/21/10 during planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>4/26/10 after school</td>
<td>5/18/10 during study hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernie</td>
<td>4/26/10 after school</td>
<td>5/12/10 after school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bert</td>
<td>4/28/10 after school</td>
<td>5/20/10 after school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.2 Interview Log Excerpt**

The interviews lasted between thirty to sixty minutes and produced over 370 pages of field notes and transcribed data. The variations in the number of interviews was a result of one of the participants preparing to move out of the state and therefore contact became increasingly-difficult and eventually impossible to maintain. The description of the value and purpose of a well-constructed interview as a *directed conversation* (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; 1985 in Charmaz, 2006), that “permits an in-depth exploration of a
particular topic with a person who has the relevant experiences” (Charmaz, 2006, p.25), characteristically-describes my effort to listen and encourage the participants in their responses. I used the interviews in this study to provide the contextual background/historical information about the participants as well as to uncover their conceptualizations of the goals and objectives of social studies. Most importantly the interviews provided an opportunity for the participants to share their relationship between what they believed and felt about the discipline (social studies), the subject matter (Global History, World Cultures, US History, Government) and how they designed and enacted it in their social studies classrooms. Lastly, the interviews served as opportunities to delve further into their conceptualizations, to inquire into the observed practices, and finally to seek further “statements, events or cases that will illuminate the categories constructed throughout the continuous data analysis process” (Charmaz, p. 103). Since I “did not know, what I did not know” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 269), the first set of interviews I conducted were semi-structured and drew upon the use of a question guide. The first interviews began by focusing upon the teacher’s historical background, including basic demographic questions, courses that they had taught and were teaching, motivations for becoming a teacher, specifically a social studies teacher, etc. I then moved toward asking them how they would define social studies, what was their perception of its role, goals, objectives, etc. Though there was structure, the interviews were designed to allow the participants to express their perspectives in their own terms. There were moments in all of the interviews where the responses and questions began to move away from the original line of questioning. This occurrence provided rich descriptions though I found it challenging to recreate the same pathway for each of the
interviews resulting in broader, richer and very relevant data. I approached the subsequent interviews as guided conversations, where the teachers were encouraged to “speak freely in their own terms about a set of concerns the interviewer brings to the interaction, plus whatever else they might introduce” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 85). The protocol for the interviews was based upon the review and initial analysis of the previous interviews, successive classroom observations and documents obtained as the study progressed with the goal of filling in the gap by asking new theoretically-based questions or experiences that I had not covered before (Charmaz, 2006).
Bethany: So, I thought we could try to think how to summarize it in a few words. Let’s say you were in an interview and someone said: “What do you believe are the goals and objectives of social studies education?” How would you respond?

Taylor: Be good, law abiding citizen, recognize there are civic duties in their community, be active in their community as a volunteer. Always thing that, when you are… learning history is not something that just happened hundreds of years ago and why do we need to know it? Think of how that is relating to the next part of history. Like try to keep that thread going through each thing because that, I think, makes the whole picture. It’s not just we’re studying this and then we’re studying this and then we’re studying this. I try to make it look this is whole thing so let’s try to bring this all together. How do these all relate to each other? How do they connect?

Bethany: OK. I was just going to say. So, what would your role be then and you just kind of answered that. So, you bring it all… You help bring it all together.

Taylor: Well, I try, at least.

Bethany: So, then what do you think? Do you think those goals are any different than they are as a history teacher if you were to say, as a history teacher, I am expected to…?

Taylor: No. I think they are the same.

Bethany: OK. So then what do you think about in relation to the students, what do you think the students… you kind of said that when I said what is social studies education and your role is to help them to achieve being a good citizen, those kind of things but what if… Can you think of some specific things that you think students should know or be able to do as 21st century children that they are?

Taylor: If they go seek out the solution, be part of the solution, not part of the problem because I think a lot of kids, and I saw this in my class today, they didn’t get that one question that was one of the objectives of the day. Like, I want you to know this when you leave today and I gave them the quiz because they were wasting their time and I though “Well, you know what. I just wanted to see ”Did they get the work done. They were like “We didn’t even get the last question” and it was like they were waiting for me to just give it to them and I’m trying to install in them go find it. Use your resources, whatever those recourses are. Go out and use them. Don’t depend on someone to just constantly be giving you this information. I guess that’s the biggest thing is go out and seek the answer using whatever resources are available and learn technology. Technology is really big and even though we don’t have it, technology does not have to be an iPhone. Technology can be an overhead. It can be very simple. It doesn’t need to be this huge…it can be a calculator. It doesn’t have to be something so complicated and hard to figure out but with this they can just look in their book but they don’t want to go in there and look.

Table 3.3 Interview Excerpt
Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were another methodological tool I employed to gather rich descriptive data. Charmaz (2006) reminds the researcher: “a method provides a tool to enhance seeing but does not provide automatic insight” (p. 16). Being mindful of this I kept detailed field notes of what I saw, heard, thought, felt, and supposed. My role throughout the observations was primarily as a participant observer. Glesne (2006), described the act of being part of a social setting as an opportunity to explore “firsthand how the action of research participants correspond to their words; see patterns of the behavior; experience the unexpected, as well as the expected” (p. 49) and develop better interpretations as a result of linking emerging interview questions with observed behavior. Each of the teacher participants’ classes were informed of my presence and though often I would simply sit in the back or on the side of room, there were opportunities for me to interact directly with both the teacher and the students. On a couple of occasions I was asked to respond or expand upon a particular topic as well as work with small groups of students by facilitating a discussion or reviewing an assignment. Teachers were the focal point of the study and therefore I did not record specific data about students. I did, however, note some their comments and their actions, in order to provide context, without any identifiers such as gender, age or ethnicity. My previously established status as a person of trust by all of the participants increased the likelihood that my presence in the classroom was not viewed as awkward or intrusive. Likewise my familiarity and comfort level with the teacher participants, the content and the classroom setting, as a former teacher and student teaching supervisor, prompted me to remain vigilant of my role as a researcher and to be reflexive about what I brought to
the scene, what I observed, and how I observed it (Charmaz, 2006). In each of the three school settings, I observed at least one day a week and sometimes more, in the case of extended classroom activities. The total number of classes observed was fifty-five, for an approximate total of seventy-four hours. For three of the settings, the standard class time was one hour, which included time before and after class. In one setting, the alternative school, block scheduling was practiced and each class was almost two hours, though there were a variety of other activities and schedule changes, which meant flexibility was an imperative, on both my part and the part of the teachers.

Table 3.4 Observation Log Excerpt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Date and time</th>
<th>Date and time</th>
<th>Date and time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>5/7/10 6th 1-2</td>
<td>5/10/10 2nd &amp; 3rd 9-11</td>
<td>5/19/10 2nd, 3rd, 4th 9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>5/7/10 4th 10:30-11:20</td>
<td>5/12/10 4th 10:30-11:30</td>
<td>5/18/10 4th &amp; 5th 10:30 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>5/7/10 5th 11:20-12:10</td>
<td>5/25/10 8:00-9:45</td>
<td>5/27/10 2nd &amp; Farm 11:30-1:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5/11/10 3rd &amp; 4th 9:30-11:15</td>
<td>5/18/10 4th &amp; 5th 10:30 - 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernie</td>
<td>5/12/10 12:30 – 2:30</td>
<td>5/21/10 12:30- 4:00</td>
<td>5/25/10 9:45-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bert</td>
<td>5/12/10 12:30 – 2:25</td>
<td>5/21/10 12:30- 4:00</td>
<td>5/25/10 9:45-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My field notes were both handwritten in a notebook as well as typed on my laptop computer. This was dependent upon the noise level of the class being observed, as I did not want my typing or computer itself to cause a distraction. All handwritten notes were later transcribed to create a digital fieldwork record. This enabled me to code (second round) and make notations on them by hand thereby easily distinguishing between the observation notes, review notes and the later rounds of coding. In some cases, when requested by the teacher participant, as in the excerpt below, the class session was digitally recorded. This allowed me to review the session and fill in any gaps of missing
information as well as “giving back” to the participant by providing a useful feedback tool. Whether recording or not, I penned the field notes based on Glesne’s (2003) discussion of descriptive, analytic and autobiographical notes. Descriptive notes focus on observable behaviors and characteristics of people, places, activities, processes and verbal interactions. Along with focused note-taking of the teaching practices, content and interactions that occurred, I documented details of the classroom setting including, seating arrangements, environmental descriptions, décor, showcasing of student work, etc. Analytic notes include field reflections {before, during and after}, questions for the participant, and the notation of patterns. I found this to be a more pragmatic space to record these brief analyses, whereas the writing of memos allowed me to expand upon these notations. I would briefly note what I had learned, the connections or themes that may have begun to emerge, notes to revisit a prior observation and what follow up questions I wanted to ask in BOLD print. Lastly, autobiographical notes included my behavior, emotions (positive and negative) and my reactions to observations. Autobiographical notes are vital to reflecting on the co-creation of the research process. These notations included personal value judgments that I may have felt regarding something that occurred before, during or after the observation, my contributions, if any, how I was feeling, etc. These eventually would be removed, noted by an “***” and placed in another file since in some instances the participant would be given a copy of the transcription as a verification procedure.
E - I’ll be our moderator, guests represent every branch of government at every level. (judicial, legislative, executive – local, state, national)

E - Today, we will be discussing, which office in this country is the most influential?

E - You must provide SPECIFIC evidence. Use your arguments like a weapon. The second big phase, breakout sessions will help you address your essay questions for your final exam.

E - And now for introductions.
(has each student identify who they are, their branch and their government level)

(every student has a laptop)

(Ernie serves as a moderator, sometimes asking questions, sometimes reminding them “one at a time”)

E - One of the rules of the Socratic seminar is hearing from other voices. I would like to invite those of you who have not spoken.
If you have spoken twice I would like the next thing out of your mouth to be “I would like to hear from…..”
{active guiding to promote participation}

E - What is one thing you control Ms. Pelosi? That is very good!
(the students who are not actively participating appear to be researching and/or reading about their roles – {does he know this? Is this acceptable?}

E - What are some specific programs or departments you have control of? What is it you exactly do? Your most important job is peoples safety?
Thank you very much.

(1:08:26 = 68:026)
(students have been instructed to take notes on the other roles and responsibilities)

E- Please continue inviting people in. This has been very successful. Please invite them in.
{students must have a clear and somewhat confident of the role and expectations of their position as well as be able to give specific examples of work they have contributed to in this role}

E - Please keep inviting other members to speak.
(Ernie interjects to help a student clarify their role by asking a series of questions that allow her to discover the power of her role as the leader of the minority party.)
(1:16:36 – 76:36)

{ASK FOR DETAILS OF THE ASSIGNMENT, MAYBE EVEN THE SYLLABUS- I ASKED ERNIE AND HE SAID HE WOULD SEND ME COPY OF ALL OF THE GOVERNMENT ASSIGNMENTS – SENDING AN EMAIL NOW, ALSO NEED TO SEND HIM A COPY OF THE AUDIO}
It was my belief, the opportunity to experience social studies in action in the same
temporal and spatial dimensions as the participants with whom I am co-constructing
knowledge can only be achieved through becoming a part of the social studies classroom

Document Analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate the use of documents as an available and rich
source of data. As a third data source they enabled triangulation of the data, increasing
the credibility and validity of the data. I collected relevant documents such as lesson
plans, readings, student-handouts, project/assessment instructions and objectives,
textbook chapters and curriculum/content standards. Charmaz (2006) noted an essential
consideration with regard to the treatment of documents in the research context,
reminding us that though, they are often considered as “facts” they are, in fact,
constructed by individuals or groups of individuals. She specifically noted: “Whatever
stands as data, flows from some purpose to realize a particular objective. In turn,
purposes and objectives arise under particular historical, social and situational
conditions” (p. 16). This was noted during analysis since the documents derived from a
variety of sources and authors, including the teacher participants. Another perspective by
Silverman (2004) views such documents as recorded data, which cannot be observed and
has not been constructed or manipulated by the researcher. The lesson/unit plans,
readings, textbooks and project/assessment instructions, though analyzed and interpreted
by me, were not created or influenced by me, thereby offering a perspective through
another set of eyes. The analysis of the texts used to facilitate the social studies teacher’s
lesson and objectives provided another level of data, especially through the use of constant comparative analysis. The documents collected for this study also provided additional details regarding lessons/projects that had been referred to during the interviews or used by the teachers in their social studies classrooms. The documents were reviewed and analyzed using the Document Summary Form (Appendix D).

**Reflexive journal**

At the onset of the dissertation process I began writing and compiling questions, ideas, reflections, brainstorms, etc in a journal. The process of recording such information has been instrumental in my growth as a novice researcher. Potter (1996) as quoted in Glesne (2006) categorizes three ways researchers display reflexivity:

1. Inquiry into and discussion of decisions affecting the research process:
   How the setting is chosen, how access is achieved, how the researcher presents self to participants how data are recorded, etc.

2. Inquiry into and discussion of the methods used, accompanied by concerns and questions regarding the data collected and interpretations made.

3. Inquiry into and discussion of one’s biases and perspectives (p. 125).

Glesne (2006) goes on to add or restate: “For me, reflexivity means that you are as concerned with the research processes as you are with the data you are obtaining” (p. 123). I have practiced and continue to practice all three displays of reflexivity and have continually re-examined and questioned how and why decisions and interpretations were made. In addition, I made a space for more personal reflections on the entire research experience, thus enabling me to “vent” and reflect upon my personal questions and
concerns. As a co-constructive of this data and its analysis it was imperative that I account for my own interpretative processes and positions. Reflexivity is inherent in constructivist approaches as it “assumes that what we take as real, as objective knowledge and truth, is based upon on our perspective” (Schwandt, 1994 in Charmaz, 2000, p. 523). In addition: “discovered reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts” (p. 524). Thus, through this process I have attempted to create and give meaning to our interactions as well my interactions with the methods.

May 8, 2010
Long delay on this thing, though I have been writing and voice recording throughout, I just have to organize everything to one place. Made my first BIG researcher error. In addition to being WAY behind in transcribing my interviews, I just realized I taped over one of my participant’s interviews! Fortunately, I feel comfortable enough with the participant to just be honest with her and try again, though obviously I will not get the same information, some is better than none. I cannot believe how long it is taking me to do this. I am in a constant state of guilt because I am clearly not coding on a daily basis and staying close to my data. I think if I stay out at the schools longer during the day I will be able to do more of this. Such as what I did with Taylor yesterday. I observed one class then worked on editing and some coding while I sat through the next class. It also gave me the opportunity to follow up on some questions and clarify notes I had made.

May 10, 2010
Life is messy. While I am listening to the students in Taylors’s class I can hear the buzz of how hard this activity is. It seems like a lot of them recognize the connections but get frustrated trying to put them into a particular part of the chart or column. Maybe they could simply list all of the effects then put them into charts or columns, to create their own visual representation. It seems that forcing them to put things into compartments or boxes does not allow them to create their own understandings of the connections, it forces them to follow rather then allow them to lead.

May 12, 2010
I’m waiting to chat with Ernie. I am finding that follow-up questions have not been possible in most cases. Now I have a chance and I’m not sure what to ask. Specifically in this case. So much will come from the observation today. With this school and specifically these two participants I sense that I will mostly identify the skills the students will be acquiring rather than the content. I believe this was evident in the interviews as well. Do I need to connect the skills and content? Maybe I could ask them what they believe the students are gaining from their other courses. Even probing into some specific questions about their perceptions about what their students will actually be able to do and it that any different than what they hope they will do, such as their goals and objectives for their students.

Table 3.6 Reflexive Journal Excerpt
Data management

Data management is essential for qualitative researchers since the data generated by qualitative methods are generally voluminous (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The veracity of that statement is demonstrated by the extensive amount of paper used. I set out mostly reliant on a digitally-managed system in order to both organize and protect the generated data as well as to reduce the amount of natural resources used, namely ink, paper and other consumable items. In reality, the storing of the interviews, field notes, memos, and reflexive journal electronically created an access problem. The process of constant comparison, though highly conceptual, required visual access to multiple documents at the same time, thus, I found this did not work well on a computer. Though resistant to using hard copies and large quantities of paper I felt it was necessary to so in order to move back and forth between data sources. Therefore, I constructed individual ringed notebooks for each participant as well as for each chapter in the writing process. All of the data collected from the interviews, observations and document collection was first transcribed and stored on an internal and external hard drive device. I then printed all of the above, using both sides of the paper and placed them in their appropriate notebook. I used colored paper to distinguish between the participants this being of tremendous value during the data analysis process. The notebooks never left my home office and were labeled with the pseudonyms of the participants to ensure confidentiality. The journal and memos were recorded both electronically and by hand. I eventually created hard copies of most of these and consolidated them into one three ringed binder and four spiral notebooks (kept inside the binder) for the purpose of access and accountability (Glesne, 2006). In my experience the storing of all of the above items in only an
electronic format was not conducive to creating an efficient, practical and productive research environment. A mobile notebook/folder was also designed for each research participant for visiting the field sites to keep whatever items were collected or distributed separated from each other. Every effort was made to ensure the organization and safety of all research materials. The amount of data collected using qualitative methods can easily overwhelm the researcher therefore, employing a variety of organizational strategies provided me with access and manageability (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

Data Analysis

How I made meaning out of my data was determined by my previous research design decisions as well as the reality of the process I followed. “Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 273). This literal continuous interplay allowed me to view and conceptualize the data again and again, developing new ideas each time it was revisited and compared with a new set of data. The use of the constant comparative method, first introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is an essential element in grounded theory data analysis in order to “establish analytic distinctions” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). Charmaz (2000) describes it as the comparing of people with themselves and others across time and space, the comparing of incidents/events, the comparing of data within categories and cross-categorical comparisons (Jones et al, 2005; Glaser, 1992). After each interview and/or observation session, I would either write or record a brief reaction or reflection, also referred to as a memo, and later compare it to what I began seeing emerge from the data itself. Prior to performing comparisons of data and
data corpuses, the process of coding must begin. This process, according to Charmaz (2000), is what initiates the chain of theory development (p. 515).

I would like to note, there is some divergence in the methodology and terminology used between Charmaz and her predecessors Glaser, Strauss and Corbin (Charmaz, 2000, 2006: Bowen, 2008). She notes one of the distinctions associated with the latter’s objectivist underpinnings is the use and creation of awkward scientific jargon that can “cloak analytic power” (p. 525). Instead, Charmaz suggests: “making categories consistent with studied life helps to keep that life in the foreground” (p. 526). In discussing the methodological pathway that I followed in this research study, I will mostly advance Charmaz’s (2006) framework for constructivist grounded methodology.

**Initial coding**

Constructivist grounded theory data analysis calls for series of coding, writing and sampling procedures. Coding defines what is going on in the data and allows you to begin to consider what it means, while it: “simultaneously categorizes, summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). Coding involves at least two stages: initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2006), within each of these stages are a variety of strategies for coding. Charmaz (2006) describes initial codes as: “provisional, comparative and grounded in the data” (p. 18). Some general guidelines, during the initial coding stage include:

- Remain open
- Stay close to the data
- Keep your codes simple and precise
- Construct short codes
- Preserve actions
- Compare data with data
Move quickly through the data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 49)

Further guidelines direct how to do the coding. The first, line-by-line coding, involves naming (Glaser, 1978) or conceptualizing (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) each line of the data. This step allows you to establish conceptual names for the data and to begin the comparative process with previously collected data, recollections of field notes and interviews. Since I was seeking to identify the core conceptualizations and practices of the social studies teachers in my study, I chose to begin with line-by-line line coding in order to learn more about their world through a close examination of each of their actions and statements. This process allowed me to gain early insights about what kinds of data to collect next and what leads to pursue (Charmaz, 2006).

The initial coding also included the use of “In vivo” codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006), which refer to the participant’s personal language and symbolic meanings. This is an important co-constructive strategy as it is eventually integrated into the emerging theory. I began coding as soon as I began collecting data, though I found it challenging to stay on top of it with so much data coming in at once. So I made sure to listen to the recordings and read through my field notes to some degree on a daily basis and worked on the line-by-line coding along the way. The reviews, note taking, and early coding enabled me to develop questions for future semi-structured interviews. As the data collection continues, the complexity of the coding will evolve and begin to move toward a definable and manageable focus (Glesne, 2006, p. 150).
P: It was interesting because I was into more of a geography emphasis with historical facts and culture spliced in. This is more World History with a smidge of Geography.

R: Okay. That's interesting. So hold that thought because I'm going to bring that up in a minute. Well, actually, tell me more about that. What is it you prefer to have that geography or why is that important?

P: I liked geography just because I love maps and I love logistically knowing if I'm in Israel and Syria's going to attack me, that's to the north and I'm well aware of... when you're talking about the dynamics of what surrounds a country like Israel for example, because you got Jordan and you got Egypt. You know prior to it being Jordan, it was Trans Jordan and Lebanon. So see, you got those countries that surround you, as well as Pakistan. You kind of got to know in your brain that there's limited amount of water and it happens to be on the West Bank so gee, that's what everybody wants and by those topography kinds of things to me it kind of makes sense then to understand why the fertile crescent in the Middle East had all the fighting over it. Because you could have food, you could have water and survive. If you have no skills for survival, how do you go on?

R: How would you describe that skill for students? Does that make sense? Like students should be able to or you feel student should have this. Because you just said I so. Is it any different? Should you want your students to know? Or should know?

P: I try to put the Geography... I deal more with my honors the geography skills, then I deal with my global. Only because there's got to be a level of maturity. You've got to be able to read and understand the math. You've got to be able to read a topography map and understand it and if I'm dealing with discipline issues, the topography, they're not getting it then we just move on. But with my Honor Students, they're Oh, there's water in this area. Then they can start seeing the threads of history and I think they've done a very good job understanding the threads throughout history, the reoccurring themes. And so I think the geography is just a natural now. If we were to offer it to an older student, they would really understand it and they would really like it because history would make sense but nobody would take it.

R:

P:

Table 3.7 Interview Initial Coding Sample
**Focused Coding**

The second coding stage is focused coding. These codes are more “directed, selective and conceptual than line-by-line coding. … allowing the researcher to synthesize and explain larger segments of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). This is an active process, comparing data to data, across participants and collection methods that enabled me to repeatedly interact with the data, by keeping myself and the codes close to the data. In this stage I wrote directly on the transcriptions and used post-it notes to record the emerging codes. Also in this process categories began to emerge where ideas, events, actions, comments, interactions that were “found to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning are grouped under more abstract concepts” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 102).

**Memos**

The most crucial step, and the step that will facilitate the focused codes into tentative categories, is memo writing, which “forms the core of your grounded theory” (Charmaz, 2006, 94). Memos are similar to the exercise of free-writing as they relate to a conversation with yourself about how a particular code or category is developing, what it means to you, what it may mean to the participant and how it fits into the bigger picture. This began early in the research process and continued throughout allowing me to expand and analyze ideas “in any and every way that occurs to you during the moment” (Charmaz, 2006; also Glaser, 1998). They provide a valuable opportunity for you to freely explore and expand upon any ideas and thoughts you have had throughout the
process up to that point and moving forward. Charmaz (2006) suggests some options might include, but are not limited to:

- Define each code or category by its analytic properties
- Spell out and detail processes subsumed by the codes or categories
- Make comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes and codes, codes and categories, categories and categories
- Bring raw data into the memo
- Provide sufficient empirical evidence to support your definitions of the category and analytic claims about it (assertions and warrants)
- Offer conjectures to check in the field settings
- Identify gaps in the analysis
- Interrogate a code or category by asking questions of it (p. 82).

As noted above, a main focus of memos is comparisons, which supports Glaser and Strauss’s constant comparative methods (Charmaz, 2006, p. 87). This process, if executed early and often, will result in a more thoroughly analyzed data corpus and constructed theory. It will also be less likely to contain gaps due to an increase in the awareness of questions that need to be answered and areas that still need to be addressed. Below is a memo in which I explored the idea of what is not in the data through the construct of systemic reasoning as well as what is there. I theorized about possible explanations for the gaps, and the importance of relationships and connections as concepts. This enabled me to create an early category called curriculum spaces.
Table 3.8: Memo Sample

Theoretical Sampling

In an effort to provide transparency and honor an ethical standard I feel it is necessary to discuss my trepidation that I may not have conducted what some might deem a completely “authentic” grounded theory study. This is evident due to my lack of a thorough understanding of grounded theory methodology, specifically theoretical sampling and saturation. As I reviewed Chapter 3 in my original proposal I realized I had stopped it after the discussion on memo writing by stating: “Next a discussion on theoretical sampling, saturation and writing”. This appears not to be an uncommon development, particularly for those embarking on their first research journey.
Breckenridge and Jones (2009) discuss this in an article that attempts to “demystify” theoretical sampling for new grounded theory researchers. They affirm:

While many authors appear to share concurrent definitions of theoretical sampling, the ways in which the process is actually executed remain largely elusive and inconsistent. As such, employing and describing the theoretical sampling process can present a particular challenge to novice researchers embarking upon their first grounded theory study.

(Abstract, p.1)

I also realize in hindsight that I did not follow a number of other grounded theory methodology procedures. Below are four of the *Grounded Theory Guidelines* for IRB reviewers prepared by Dr. Otis Simmons (2009) of Fielding Graduate University. I have used them to identify and discuss the areas of concern regarding my research design.

1. To avoid preconception, Grounded Theory studies expressly do not begin with predetermined goals or purposes beyond generating an explanatory theory directly from data. Research begins with only a general topic area. (para.1)

I did construct an overarching question: *What is the relationship between social studies and sustainability education?* However, it could be viewed as a goal/purpose due to the presumption of the existence of a relationship between the two frameworks. Though a presumption was made, the study was exploratory due the unexplored nature of the topic.

2. To avoid preconception, Grounded Theory studies are required to begin without any pre-formulated research questions and/or hypotheses. Grounded Theory studies begin with only a general topic area. If, as is often but not always the case, the initial data is derived from an open-ended interview, the interview is initiated with a “grand tour” question.
Subsequent questions are derived from previous responses so that the participant always leads the interview. Grand tour questions are modified for each interview, according the purposes of the interview, as indicated by theoretical sampling. As defined by Glaser & Strauss (originators of the Grounded Theory method), “Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (from Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). (para. 2)

In addition to the overarching question, I offered three additional research questions, which focused on SS teacher’s identifying conceptualizations, classroom practices and the subsequent potential connections between SS and SE. The first interviews all began with a grand tour question asking: “How do you define social studies?” Subsequent interviews and their questions were individualized and derived from what I had interpreted as gaps and new areas to explore. I interpreted theoretical sampling as more of a process through which you re-examine re-conceptualizing the data you have already collected (also known as the constant comparative analysis and memos) in addition to “asking participants further questions or inquiring about experiences that you had not covered before” (Charmaz, 2006, p.103). Further analysis of the grounded theory literature confirms that there are multiple pathways for theoretical sampling to occur, including seeking new participants, field sites or events (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009).

3. Ordinarily, at the end of an interview if it appears that the participant may have more of relevance to say, permission to request a follow up interview is sought, at the participant’s discretion and if the analysis of the first interview indicates that it would be beneficial to the emerging theory.
Subsequent data collection is determined by theoretical sampling. In Grounded Theory everything relevant to the general topic area is considered data that can be analyzed using the constant comparative method of analysis. Grounded theory is emergent. Once the research begins, every future step is determined by what is being discovered in the data. (para. 3)

In this study, the design and IRB protocol called for the same participants to be used throughout by not declaring new participants would be sought. There was never an intention to identify new participants. In this study, the above statement, “everything relevant to the general topic area” was considered through the use of line-by-line coding (initial), focused coding and memos. All steps were determined by what was discovered in the data. The conceptualization was that a potential theory would emerge that might be able to illuminate where the connections between these two educational frameworks could occur.

4. The total number of participants in a Grounded Theory study cannot be known in advance. It is determined by “theoretical saturation,” which occurs when data and analysis no longer yield new variations, concepts, or categories. This can be vastly different with each individual piece of research. (para. 9)

I did not state the number of participants prior to the study, however, I did through the nomination process seek out and contact those who might be interested in participating prior to the beginning of the study. Therefore, I knew that there would be a total of five participants. The literature on the interpretation of “theoretical sampling” is quite fuzzy. The variation is dependent upon the source. Charmaz (2006) states in her book:
Constructing Grounded Theory:

When you engage in theoretical sampling, you seek statements, events or cases that will illuminate your categories. Like Hood, you may add new participants or observe in new settings. Quite possibly, you may ask earlier participants further questions or inquire about experiences that you had not covered before (p. 103).

This description proposes the option to draw further data from the original participants. In her chapter: *Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods* in Denzin and Lincoln’s (2003) edited book, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, she explicates this sampling procedure by stating:

Theoretical sampling represents a defining property of grounded theory and relies on the comparative methods within grounded theory. We use theoretical sampling to develop our emerging categories and to make them more definitive and useful. Thus the aim of this sampling is to refine ideas, not to increase the size of the original sample. Theoretical sampling helps us to identify conceptual boundaries and pinpoint the fit and relevancy of our categories. Although we often do sample people, we may sample scenes, events or documents, depending on the study and where the theory leads us. We may return to the same settings or individuals to gain further information. (p. 265)

Here, she clearly explains re-connection with the original study participants. This re-connection enabled me to delve deeper into their previous responses as well as to explore potentially emerging categories. The process of theoretical sampling was also enacted through the ongoing review of additional literature that was used to construct the memos and to reexamine and in some instances reanalyze the data.
The final area of concern, which will also be mentioned in the last section of this chapter, *Issues and Challenges That Have Emerged*, is related to the fairly extensive literature review I completed for my candidacy exams and included in my dissertation proposal. I did not realize, at the time, that such an extensive literature review should not, according to some, be completed prior to a grounded theory research study. Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987) defined several components of grounded theory practice. Their final component discusses the importance of: “Conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis” (author’s original emphasis) (Charmaz, 2006, p. 6). Charmaz (2006) sheds light on the reason for this approach by explaining that: “The intended purpose of delaying the literature review is to avoid importing preconceived ideas and imposing them on your work. Delaying the review encourages you to articulate your ideas” (p. 165). Clearly, in order to move forward into my research and studies, I had established a set of preconceived ideas, however, I would contend that without the review of this literature, I would not have arrived at a point in which I would have been able to formulate researchable questions. Therefore, in this instance the literature review provided the necessary framework to initiate an investigation into a previously unexplored topic. In Figure 3.1 below, Fernandez (2004) illustrates an expanded research model of the grounded theory method. With some minor adjustments this figure aptly illustrates the process through which I also derived my findings. An extensive amount of new, yet extant literature was identified throughout the entire research process and subsequently guided the construction of the constantly evolving categories. The categories and the relationships between them describe and explain what was occurring in the social studies teacher’s conceptualizations and
classroom practices and are discussed in Chapter 4. These findings, in turn, led to the findings discussed in Chapter 5, which would provide insights into the complex, yet approachable relationship between social studies and sustainability education.

Figure 3.1 Fernandez’s (2004, p. 85) expanded research model of the GTM

**Trustworthiness**

An essential consideration in conducting qualitative research is the establishment of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), characterized as the qualitative criteria for demonstrating the previously established quantitative concepts of validity and reliability (Shenton, 2004). The evolution of conventional quantitative researcher’s conceptualization of “rigor” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) towards the qualitative re-
conceptualization, is most often referred to as trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and has been visited and revisited by a variety of well-informed scholars such as Denzin (1970, 1994), Goetz and LeCompte (1984), Erickson (1986), Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1990, 1994), Lather (1986, 2003), Eisenhart & Howe (1992), Jones et al (2006), and Freeman et al, (2007). To date, it does not appear that a consensus has been reached, nor that there is a encompassing concentrated effort towards achieving a consensus, allowing for the openness of qualitative research to flourish in its non-prescriptiveness and “respect for another’s conventions... as a result of the heterogeneity in qualitative design and lack of an enduring hegemonic presence” (Freeman et al, 2007, p. 25). Jones et al (2006) discuss the derivative of the word qualitative, quails, which means, “what it is”, and it is often judged by the standard of “what it is not” (p. 119). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the following four criteria that have been found to be favored among constructivists in pursuit of a positivist study (Denzin, 1994):

a) credibility (in preference to internal validity);
b) transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability);
c) dependability (in preference to reliability);
d) confirmability (in preference to objectivity). (Shenton, 2004, 64)

In reviewing the literature addressing the above evolution, I chose to employ a variety of strategies in my efforts to address the trustworthiness of the analytical interpretations while I was working with the data. I focused on addressing the following four core (in Glesne, 2006, p.166) questions, which attended to the credibility component of trustworthiness, developed by Holloway and Jefferson (2000).
1.) What do I notice? What do I not notice?

Using the comparison technique discussed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) called “flip-flop”, I actively questioned the opposites, in the data, in my own decision-making as well as seeking other perspectives. I met with several of my peers, committee members, and my dissertation-writing group throughout the entire process in order to gain insights into the development of my coding/categories, interpretations and other details that I might have missed. Triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of my research methods, an essential strategy to increase credibility by seeking additional insights, included the use of interviews, participant observation, document analysis and multiple field sites. Lastly, within my data I sought and discussed elements of the data and reworked my hypotheses that did not confirm some of my earlier presumptions, also known as negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

2.) Why do I notice what I am noticing?

This inquiry invited me to engage in a continuing conversation with myself through reflexive journaling and to strive to be vigilant and mindful of my subjectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Jones et al, 2005; Patton, 2002; Altheide & Johnson, 1994). In a journal entry excerpt from April 27, 2010 I noted to myself:

In Bert’s interview (2nd), I was trying to see if he could tell me any other skills the student’s needed in order to be successful in their lives. He went right to the college and professional skills that we had discussed many times before. He felt they couldn’t be separated. Why do I try to separate them? I know part of it has to do with the habits of the mind, treating people with respect, understanding other perspectives, etc. I guess maybe the skills I value or I have associated with sustainability education. I was
definitely fishing and he was not biting. He went right back to the purpose and role of the school. He is very committed to this and it speaks volumes about the context/school environment through in which he teaches, so what else does this drive…

In this excerpt I was questioning how my own theoretical stance caused me to see things and/or react in a particular way. I also recognized the influence of his surrounding environment as a factor and questioned its impact on other areas. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the distortions, intended and unintended, exhibited by the participants. What is it that research participants want me to see and why? These questions can lead to more theoretical sampling to address them (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, this question also served as a factor supporting the triangulation of methods (Lather, 1985, 1997; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Charmaz, 2000).

3.) How can I interpret what I am noticing?

This question addressed the adequacy of or the amount of data collected and its relationship to reaching the goal of saturation (Morse, 1994; Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bowen, 2008) through prolonged engagement or spending a significant time in the field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was measured on a temporal scale in relation to: time spent on site, interviewing, observing, and building relationships with the participants, as well as the time spent with the data. It also addresses the credibility factors of appropriateness: “meeting the theoretical needs of the study” (Morse, 1994, p. 230) as well as persistent observation by “focusing in detail on those elements that are most relevant to your study” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p 300). I would argue that time spent with the data would qualify as prolonged engagement as well. If you spend an
adequate or sufficient amount of time working “with” the data you will be able to “make more with less” (Lather, April 12, 2010). I began working with the participants in April 2010 and my last interaction occurred in March 2011. The data analysis process began at the same time and has continued all the way through the writing process into April 2012. Therefore, I feel I was suitably equipped to interpret what I noticed as a result of spending enough time with the data and gathering enough thick descriptive data to add depth to my analysis.

4.) How can I know my interpretations are the right ones?

Lastly, this question led towards involving others to provide feedback, namely from the participants. Periodic member checks, which solicit responses to the major categories being formed and the interpretative process in general with the “co-constructors” is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314; Charmaz, 2006; Janesick, 1994; Glesne, 2006; Lather, 1986). Each participant was invited to review the transcribed and coded interviews and initial interpretations through the procedure of member checking. All but one were interested and participated in this crucial part of the trust process. They all received a copy of the interviews electronically, one chose to respond via digital recording and several meetings, one chose to respond by commenting directly on the document and a follow up meeting, and two of them requested one-on-one meetings in their classrooms. One participant moved out of state shortly after the school year ended, which resulted in her not being able complete the member check although we did continue to communicate via email. All arrangements resulted in valuable interpretation and editing feedback,
affirmations of trust and new ideas. Toward the latter part of the analysis and writing process, accessibility diminished and the interactions and feedback lapsed mostly as a result of my apprehension and reluctance to inconvenience the participants, since it was taking much longer than originally anticipated to progress through the final stages of analysis and writing. Seeking the assistance of peers through peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glesne, 2006), I worked with several peer partners on a regular basis over the course of the study, each providing their unique perspective and expertise from the areas of social studies, global education, sustainability education, economics, political science, anthropology, and cultural literacy. Many were also in the dissertation data gathering/writing process, one had recently finished and one was preparing to construct her proposal.

In addition to the consideration of the above questions regarding the trustworthiness of the analytical interpretations, several other credibility provisions were addressed in this study:

(a) Development of early familiarity with culture of participating organizations.
Throughout my experiences as a student teaching supervisor I had become familiar with all three of the secondary schools in this study.

(b) Description of background, qualifications and experience of the researcher.
My positionality, teaching and supervising experiences, teaching certification and status as a novice, yet informed researcher have all been reported in this research document.

(c) Examination of previous research to frame findings.
The literature review as well as the interpretation and discussion address both the gap in empirical research on sustainability education as well as the research literature addressing
past and present social studies goals and practices. Literature related to the theoretical underpinnings and frameworks for sustainability education were explored in both chapters two and five. (Shenton, 2004)

Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability

The remaining trustworthiness criterion; transferability, dependability and confirmability were attended to by the following described provisions (Shenton, 2004). The potential for transferability to compare the findings and interpretations of this study are made possible through providing thorough background data regarding the context of the study in chapters three and four as well as a detailed discussion of the phenomenon in question. The relationship between social studies education and education for sustainability and the potential for the convergence is discussed in the Introduction, and chapters two and five. Dependability, as argued by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is closely connected to credibility, thus demonstrating the latter “goes some distance in ensuring” (Shenton, 2004, p. 71) the former, though the question of the importance of context problematizes the idea of transferability. Lastly, to meet the criterion of confirmability, efforts were made to “ensure as far as possible that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher; (Shenton, 2004, p 72). The efforts encompassed the mechanisms of triangulation, my reflexivity and articulated positionality, the declaration of the study’s limitations and their plausible effects and the inclusion of a representation of my data analysis pathway.
Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, I sincerely appreciate the ability to recognize the roles that I have acquired, due to my actions, or that were ascribed to me, due to situational factors. I felt them to be significant in determining the development and type of relationship with my participants. These roles are also capable of influencing my decision-making process throughout the study. As this was my first solo research experience, I entered the research environment as both a researcher and a learner (Glesne, 1999), eager to draw not only data from the research experience, but also to acquire knowledge with regard to the process of research and to gain insight from my participant’s experiences and perspectives as social studies educators. The manner in which I represented myself in these roles was a topic of habitual reflection to ensure that my participants were informed and protected throughout the entire research process. I believe my efforts to maintain a healthy balance between being a researcher and a student of the research process served to enrich my experience in both roles, though admittedly much of this was realized upon later reflection. By holding myself both accountable and fallible as well as being adept and forthright with my participants, I believe I established a deeper sense of trust that I would do my very best to respect to conduct my study in an ethically responsible manner.

Ethics is an integral part of qualitative research as well as everyday life. Glesne (2006) emphasizes: “Ethical considerations are inseparable from your everyday interactions with research participants and with your data” (p. 129). Prior to and during the research process, the awareness of ethical principles as they relate to research decisions and applying them to dilemmas as they emerge are essential steps towards increasing the likelihood of ethical decision-making (Jones et al, 2006). Anticipation of
ethical issues was the first step in protecting my research participants from harm. All of the participants were informed in writing and verbally of the purpose of the study and consent for their participation was voluntary. This was of particular concern to me as a result of our previously established relationships. I did not want them in any way to feel pressured or obligated to participate. Through open and sincere communication I reassured them that I would completely understand if they chose to decline, particularly since I knew how busy their teaching roles already were. One of them actually changed his mind and stated that he could not be a part of the study, then after a few days he reconsidered and contacted me to re-volunteer. 

Though there was a low risk of the content in the data compromising any of the participants, I respected and ensured their right to privacy by keeping the data I collected confidential and anonymous. My research journal, notes, and any other materials relating to data I gathered from the participants were kept secured in my home office. The laptop computer I used automatically encrypted all files and was password protected. In addition, creating pseudonyms for the participating schools and allowing the participants to choose and negotiate their own personal pseudonyms helped to secure both confidentiality and anonymity.

I did encounter some ethical hesitancy when constructing the field site and participant descriptions. I was concerned about being too descriptive, thus potentially enabling outside readers the opportunity to recognize both the sites and the participants. This, I was informed, was not uncommon when one recruits participant volunteers as a result of snowball sampling. This was compounded by the participants’ previously established relationship with the university through which my study was being
conducted. All participants were made aware of this potential and did not express concern. In addition, the descriptions were not as detailed as they may have been if the context had been more unfamiliar. The same ethical dilemma arose with regard to what could have been perceived as negative or questionable actions or comments made by the participants. Ensuring the inclusion of the contextual nature of the actions/comments, earnest reflection with regard to their relevance to the study questions and member checking were the procedures that guided the protection of my participant’s while also allowing the appropriate data to be used throughout the analysis process.

**Writing up process – Putting it all together**

The act of writing involves thinking, organizing, structuring, constructing, processing, selecting, re-organizing, connecting, asserting, warranting, releasing, and articulating the thoughts and ideas that will give meaning to my data. “Writing qualitative research is an ambiguous process, our analysis entails more than reporting, we may not realize what we’ve got or know where we’re going” (Charmaz, 2006, p.154). The key is to keep moving. Ultimately, being able to reconstruct what coding, categorizing, and memo writing has extracted from the conceptualizations and observations compiled over the course of my data collection and analysis endeavors. Even more importantly, to sync my voice and the voices of my participants using the constructivist lens I set out to employ. Early on in the writing process, I began to experience anxiety over whether I was properly representing the participant’s voices and perspectives. This often resulted in the over-use of direct quotes as well as painstaking efforts to paraphrase and synthesize their voices in the most representative manner I could construct, using multiple sources of data
and encouraging the participants to review what had been constructed. The idioms: *the whole is more than the sum of its parts, less is more, and analysis to paralysis*, are evocative of my experiences during the writing process. In trying to understand the organizing structure for this process I reviewed a variety of dissertations and other literature and found them to be helpful in assisting me to create my own evolving structure. There was a constant internal deliberation about what I planned to do, what I did, and what I should have done, asking myself: “Is there something else here? Did I do this correctly? Should I go back and check?” My nature compelled me to almost always go back, thus two steps forward and three steps back, was another applicable idiom. The analysis process was iterative and synergizing as I labored to thread together the previously disconnected data, new connections and relationships as they were introduced all along the way. Throughout the writing and analysis process I began to see everything as connected, therefore a major challenge was discerning what to use and what to leave out. Identifying when the *story* was most representative of all of these connections, relationships and the participants themselves is an essential skill in the qualitative analysis and writing process. One that this novice researcher had to eventually accept will be a constant work in progress.

*Limitations of the Research*

As with most endeavors, thoughtful reflection throughout all stages of the process yields the potential limitations of this study. This research provides only a glimpse into the potential relationships between social studies and sustainability education. My goal in providing a detailed description of the research design and methods was aimed at
increasing the transferability of my findings to other contexts (Patton, 2002) therefore, the identification of its limitations are another step in the facilitation of this process.

This study may be limited in its number and the diversity of participants. An increase in the actual number of participants would provide a broader range of perspectives to draw from. Likewise, the infusion of ethnic and racially diverse participants would have demonstrated a greater sensitivity on my part as a researcher, to strive for the inclusion of voices and perspectives from those often not represented. Their lack of inclusion was not purposeful, though admittedly neither was their inclusion. A reflection regarding the diversity of the participants in the professional development school (PDS) uncovered the realization that there was little to no diversity in the larger population of social studies teachers connected with the university program. Also, not including any student perspectives was found to be very challenging throughout the study. There were a number of instances in which, I believe, the students’ perspectives would have provided an even richer description and opportunity for analysis.

Another limiting factor would be the timeframe under which this study occurred. Its focus on the last three months of the school year would most likely yield a different data corpus than one that focused upon the beginning, middle or even the entire school year. Though it should be noted there were some observations and interviews conducted at the beginning of the following school year, though not at the same frequency or intensity.

Though my relational ontology was purposeful in the selection of this study’s participants, selecting participants whom I had already established professional relationships with might have compromised aspects of the process, such as the possibility
that they may have felt the need to help me with my study. Therefore, their responses and behaviors might have reflected this inclination. Though I reassured each of them repeatedly, they also may have felt a sense of obligation to participate. Although I am including this as a possible limitation, however, I feel confident that this was not the case. As a result of these established relationships, open and honest communication occurred between the participants, and I, thus I feel strongly that they understood they were under no obligation to the university or me, to participate.

Lastly a delimiting factor in this study was to focus only on those recognized as “global educators”. This was intentional based upon the desire to ensure the probability that the data would yield some form of relationship between social studies and sustainability education. However, upon reflection, the inclusion of those who would not be considered global educators may have provided another level of relationships that would reflect a broader scope of social studies teacher’s conceptualizations and practices.

**Issues and Challenges that emerged**

Another part of the research process involves reflecting upon the issues and challenges that arose throughout the study. Important to this process is the ability to learn from and draw an understanding of the potential impacts of such issues and challenges. The lack of time the participants had, outside of class, to discuss, follow up, member check, etc, posed an unexpected challenge. There was always a sense of feeling rushed and intrusive on their time, which inhibited my ability to ask follow up and clarifying questions. These follow ups were also circumvented by the fact that trying to transcribe the interviews and observations took a significant amount of unanticipated time.
The most pervasive challenge for me involved the misinterpretation or confusion of the enacted grounded theory process of theoretical sampling, which I addressed earlier in this chapter. Charmaz (2006) noted that the subjectivity and ambiguity of constructivist inquiry leads the researcher “outward, yet reflecting about it draws us inward…subsequently, grounded theory leads us back to the world for a further look and deeper reflection—again and again” (p. 149). This iterative reflection process created a challenge for me in that I often felt I was never moving forward, that is, I often felt there was more to discover and highlight in the data and the findings. This enabled me to go deeper than I had anticipated, which resulted in, I believe, a richer and more grounded construction of findings. The issue was knowing or identifying when to stop and where not to go. One of the most common errors according to Charmaz (2006): “occurs when researchers confuse theoretical sampling with gathering data until they find the same patterns reoccurring” (p. 102). It was not about reoccurring patterns, it was about seeking “statements, events or cases” (p. 103), that illuminated my categories. In the end, Charmaz notes and I agree that researchers: “are doing grounded theory in whatever way they understand it” (p. 148). This chapter was intended to explain my understanding of the grounded theory process.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the methodological process I employed in this qualitative study.
Chapter Four

What do social studies teachers think and what do teachers do in their classrooms?

Introduction

In this chapter I will lay the foundational groundwork for addressing the overarching question, which framed this research study. What is the relationship between social studies and sustainability education?

This will be done by first presenting the findings related to my first two research questions in Section One and Section Two:

1. How do social studies teachers conceptualize the goals of social studies education?

These findings reflect the skills, habits, perspectives and dispositions the five participants both implicitly and explicitly identified as fundamental to a student’s social studies education experience.

2. How is social studies enacted or practiced in their classrooms?

These findings reflect the teacher’s explicit and implicit enactment of purposeful design, modeling, linking and application of the many of the skills, habits, perspectives and dispositions conceptualized as fundamental to social studies.

And the third research question,
3. *What do social studies’ teacher’s perspectives and practices indicate about the potential connections between social studies and sustainability education.*

will be addressed in Chapter 5. The final chapter (6) will then connect and synthesize the findings from all three questions to the sustainability education literature, thus completing the picture by discussing the relationship between the two educational frameworks, the implications of this relationship and future questions to consider regarding this relationship.

The first question will be addressed by sharing some of the narrative excerpts of the participants as they explored and conceptualized the definition and goals social studies. I will then discuss the major findings and sub-findings related to these conceptualizations. Before discussing these findings I will revisit an aspect of my methodology in order to provide context for how I will address the research questions. I would like to address the purposeful sampling of social studies educators who were not considered “sustainability educators” by either themselves or their peers. The purpose of *not* focusing on sustainability educators in this grounded theory study was to investigate what already existed in the social studies teacher’s conceptualizations, standards of their discipline and their social studies classrooms, thereby not making an overt presumption of the existence of sustainability principles and themes. As described in detail in Chapter Three, none of the participants had a working knowledge or awareness of the existence of sustainability as an educational framework. Familiarity with the concept of sustainability itself may have existed as a result of its presence throughout the media and popular culture. As a former social studies teacher, I did postulate its likely existence in some form in the conceptualizations, objectives and practices of social studies education. My
intention was to listen, observe and interact with the participants so as to not increase their awareness or knowledge of sustainability education in an attempt to inhibit the potential for them to consciously include sustainability education principles in their conceptualizations and practices. This enabled me through the coding and category construction of the data corpus to employ primarily universal social studies terminology and concepts, rather than terminology related to sustainability education that could have occurred if the topic was openly discussed and explored. The terminology in the recent field of sustainability education has some congruence with social studies terminology; likewise there are areas of divergence. My intent was to honor the vernacular of the participants and the social studies disciplines while constructing the findings through categories, which would demonstrate the areas of overlap, while attempting to maintain that sustainability education and social studies are not indistinguishable.

**Teacher’s Social Studies’ Conceptualizations**

**Complexity in defining social studies – Purposes of citizenship**

To begin the discussion of my findings I will address the similar, yet distinctive conceptualizations of social studies and in some cases, the specific disciplines, such as World History/Global Studies, of the five participants (Table 4.1) during the interviews. This emerged unexpectedly as a result of the realization that the participants’ conceptualizations varied significantly enough to warrant its discussion as a finding. The following narratives illustrate the complexity and individuality of each teacher’s perception of what *social studies* is to them. Though this data was included in the coding and categorizing, its inclusion here provides a rich description of the symbiotic variance
among the conceptualizations. Since one of the goals of the study was to identify how sustainability education may be embedded within social studies education, the participants were not directly asked any questions pertaining to educating for sustainability until the very end of the study. Those data sets were not used to address the first two research questions in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Yrs teaching</th>
<th>School Setting Experiences</th>
<th>Current Subjects</th>
<th>Previously Taught Subjects</th>
<th>Favorite Subject in School</th>
<th>Other career pursuits or interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>*Suburban – high diversity, Urban, Vocational</td>
<td>Global Studies, Honors, Global Studies</td>
<td>Geography, Government, US History, Reading, Special Education Technology</td>
<td>Math then Social Studies</td>
<td>Politics, Completed law school, Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>*Suburban – high diversity, Urban</td>
<td>Honors World History</td>
<td>Same as current</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Intervention specialist – initial choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rural, Urban, *Multi-district drawing from urban, suburban and rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Studies and Hard Sciences</td>
<td>Naturalist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Participant Demographics
The first interview focused upon the following basic questions: *What are the goals of Social Studies, how do you define it, what are the goals of the specific subject(s) you teach, what do you want your students to know and/or be able to do?* The other questions or variations came about as a result of further probing and/or for clarification if the participant seemed to be struggling with conceptualizing or verbalizing the original question. Since the first question was used with all of the participants, I will share each of their initial responses in order to illustrate the diverse conceptualizations of social studies as a discipline. It should be noted that some of the narratives to this question are quite lengthy and in some cases they may be perceived as circuitous. This observation, in fact, supports my perception of the difficulty experienced by the participants to express what may seem should be a simple definition of social studies. This is particularly significant, due to the fact that all of the participants received their Masters in Education degrees and secondary social studies teaching certification at the same midwestern University. Though this was not realized until after the study had commenced, it became of interest as the divergences began to surface. In asking each of the participants about the definition and the goals of social studies, I received the following responses (*researcher emphasis*):

Taylor:

I think it’s more than just history. I think it’s more about *incorporating*… being a good citizen. Like, what is required of being a good citizen? You should know, I’m trying to think what specific example, like, when it comes to voting. What are you really voting for? Are you just going out to vote because everyone else is voting yes? Or, is it your civic obligation and duty to go out and learn what this issue is about? Don’t just go with
the flow and read the first thing you see in the newspaper. Like learning the difference between credible and reliable sources. Knowing how to cite things and give people the credit that they came up with. A lot of it is the history and learning from the past and not making the same mistakes but I do think it’s bringing in current events and talking about that. So, it’s more than just what the history textbook says. Although it’s a great guide and I use that a lot but it’s also, I know, aligned to the standards and, like, we do a citizen aspect of this grade. That makes them go out and volunteer or give to a food… Giving back, I think, is another big part of social studies because we can be a very me generation. “It’s all about me.” How’s this going to benefit me? You have to look outside. If that’s how it’s going to be then we are never going to improve on anything because we are just worried about ourselves so we try to get them to… There’s other things, you are just a small piece of this big puzzle so you have got to give back a little bit.

In her narrative, Taylor identified a number of specific concepts associated with both social studies specifically and education in general. These included citizenship, history, standards, civic obligation, writing and research skills, relevancy, media literacy, current events, duty and giving back. Her reflections also, in some instances, aligned very closely to some of the mainstream understandings, NCSS and the state social studies standards.

Ernie’s response provided a unique view of social studies as a social science.

Social studies is a study of the human species. It’s a story of who we are. It’s the answer to our own question of, Why us? I think social science is research based. I think that there are shades of the same idea. Social studies seem to be what you study in middle school. And so when I talk about myself I say I’m the Social Science teacher at --- because we try to have a research based component to it and we try to
bring quantitative data in as much as possible. And we keep talking about sociology and economics and the harder sciences of the social, the human experience. I think social science teaches us who we are. And I think that is an extremely profound question to answer. That reaches the abstract and the philosophical and the spiritual in the way that hard science cannot, does not, and chooses not to answer. But they’re side-by-side. Psychology and sociology, so much of those fields come from what we are as primates right?, they inform the who we are as groups as a community.

Ernie’s conceptualizations included the importance of emphasizing the study of humans and their story. By studying humans as social beings and using a research based approach, his view moves toward a social science perspective. His perception encompasses abstract, philosophical and spiritual approaches and the most pervasive concepts for him included story, community, human meaning and research.

Bert, who overhead part of Ernie’s response, began his discussion with an emphasis on the social science characterization.

You like how we’re saying Social Science? But don’t you find that interesting, like don’t you kind of like get the snickering connotation of social studies. We were just studying maps. What are you doing in social studies? You’re memorizing the Presidents. In high school…I mean listen you are as serious as you treat yourself. I think in social studies, I don’t think it started off that way but especially now as people are moving towards STEM. I think Social Science and Government, History teachers need to start taking themselves a little more seriously otherwise it’s going to be like Thanksgiving and we’re going to be at the kids’ table. All the grown-ups, the core classes are over there. I mean it’s not really tested, which brings me back to my earlier point when I was talking to you about we need a standard. We need a system of…I’m not saying we need a
standardized test I’m saying we need a system of accountability. A democracy, a bureaucracy demands a system of accountability. So that’s my perception of Social Science. I think I usually see myself as like the connection between the physical sciences and the core content classes. And we talk about the application to all the other courses… We’re supposed to be there to help them make connections. And we’re also talking about the application to human society. So in Social Science class let’s talk about application. Let’s talk about how it’s been applied to society. …Academically, I just see us filling in those other things that, those study skills, some organization skills, some like life skills.

Bert emphasized in his conceptualizations of social studies as a social science: accountability, connection making, academic and life skills, application to other courses as well as to society and though not explicitly stated, a sense of legitimacy. Bert and Ernie moved away from the terms social studies and towards social sciences partly as a result of their concerns for legitimacy and accountability. Below Ernie’s member check reflections on this explain and clarify their position further:

…this is something I have built more and more of a definitive yes to. The fact that social science is research based and social science is related to social studies, but social studies always had a connotation, for me, of posters (laughter) in a social studies classroom in seventh grade and I don’t know why I just always think of posters and, you know pictures of Aztec carvings. Social science is hands on and researched based, its data and analysis and its running studies, its action research and I’m mean, that’s to me what social science has always been about. Reading these notes again, I’m struck again with that certainty of really believing that’s true. ‘And we try to bring quantitative data in as much as possible. And
Here Ernie, through his comparison of “posters” and “research”, alluded to his awareness of an increase in the complexity and understanding of the human experience through the multi-disciplinary lens of the social sciences. That is, to dig deeper than what may appear on the surface of human behavior. They didn’t seem to believe there was a clear distinction between the two beyond how social studies may be perceived in relation to the term social sciences. Also, the social sciences inclusion of a research-based component was perceived as very important and likely resulted from their experience working in a STEM school environment.

Marie’s response offered yet another perspective:

It's the story of life and life is going to be on many different levels and many different perspectives. And there's living history, there's dead history, and then there's the real history. And who even really knows what the real history is. It's been so interpreted or reinterpreted so many times. I think it's all encompassing because I think it deals with . . . When I think of Social Studies I think of social issues so then there's social skills that come from it. And then there's sub lists that go under that, social issues and social skills.

Marie’s conceptualizations of the goals of social studies, similar to Ernie, began with the reference to the “story” and storytelling. In this first interview, Marie shared a lengthy version of the story behind a French Revolution conspiracy and the twisted relationship between a Cardinal, a young vengeance seeking peasant girl, a prostitute and Marie Antoinette. In her description, she also spoke about the complexity and comprehensive
nature of the discipline, referring to its different perspectives, interpretations and types of history, with social issues and skills receiving additional emphasis. Lastly, Elizabeth first responded by stating:

The world, our history, people’s culture, understanding each other and striving for a better world and that takes everything that takes your science, that takes your math, that takes your English, your foreign languages, I mean. Of course every division thinks that theirs is THE ultimate and be all, social studies really ties a lot of things together.

In this narrative, Elizabeth’s viewed social studies as a connector of other disciplines, with the goal of understanding and acting about the knowledge of global history, cultures, and each other. This was the most succinct response given, I then inquired specifically about the goals of social studies.

ME: “If your were to say the goal of social studies is to… (she giggles)
How would you finish that sentence?”
Elizabeth: “Well, I don’t think I could finish social studies but if you maybe broke it down with history and economics and geography.”

I responded. “Okay, that’s a good point. So, I guess I’m trying to see if you, if you are teaching history, but you view yourself as a social studies teacher, so how do you reconcile that, what do you do in your classroom?”

She then shared:

I think it is just a part of what we do, history is just a part of what I do. I have to bring in the other social studies topics to be introduced and learned and understood as, um, if you want to talk social studies and your weaving everything together, if I’m just going to talk about history, then I’m going to talk about the his—sssstory (her emphasis on story), the story and then
we’ll weave in the economic the geography, the political systems and whatever else that go along with it. So, they just need to understand there are just individual pieces they just all get woven together. (researcher emphasis) ***

Here, she also used the concept of story to define history and then weaving together pieces from the other areas within social studies, emphasized that they are also part of the story, yet added and blended together. The idea of the various subjects within social studies, political science, geography, etc., being woven together emerged as an early theme, which would then evolve into the concept of interconnectedness.

I ended with Elizabeth’s example because I felt the participants hesitated when focusing upon and discussing social studies, per se. This was illustrated through their restating of the questions, long pauses, verbal pauses such as “um” and even laughing. NCSS defines social studies as: “…the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence…the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life” (NCSS, 2010, p. 3). Though none of the responses literally quoted the “official” NCSS definitions and goals, some were more related than others. As one might expect, they were constructing their conceptualizations of social studies as they spoke.

When asked if they considered themselves social studies teachers, Elizabeth, Taylor and Bert responded “yes”, Marie stated she “publically referred to herself as a social studies teacher, yet considered herself a World History teacher” and Ernie said “yes,” but later during the member check strongly questioned the transcription of his response as a possible error, noting he couldn’t imagine ever saying he considered himself a “social studies” teacher. Therefore, they almost all considered or referred to themselves “social
studies/science” teachers. Once we began discussing the specific disciplines, history, government, global studies, geography, etc., they seemed more at ease with their responses, especially when referring to examples in their classroom and lessons. Yet, in nearly every interview they would eventually state that they were in fact teaching social studies. For example Marie who had proclaimed earlier “I consider myself a World History teacher”, later after a lengthy discussion about her role and the student expectations in teaching world history, American history and government, stated: “So that's my job as a Social Studies teacher”. Likewise, Elizabeth after choosing to explain the goals of history, economics and geography rather than the goals of social studies went on to explain that students needed to have an understanding of what and how the various subjects within social studies are separate, while acknowledging that “they do all meet together” and noted the way that schools and teachers influence putting it all together.

It’s all about connecting

The notion of connecting emerged consistently throughout the data collection to the extent that categories within the concept of connecting began to emerge as well. I will discuss the participant’s conceptualizations of connecting through the following sub-findings;

*S1 - Social Studies as a connector
*S2 - Teacher as connector
*S3 - Students as connectors – ultimate goal
*S4 - Story as a connector – a vehicle for making connections- sense making
Each of the above sub-findings represents the meaningful role played by the social studies discipline, the teacher, the students and the concept of story as the mechanisms through which connections are made.

**Social Studies as a connector**

Social studies can be conceptualized as a stand-alone approach or as individual courses such as world history, global studies, American history, world cultures and government. Each perspective was explored in this study based upon the perception of the individual teacher. The first to emerge and most recurring element throughout this study was the idea or notion of *connection* and other forms of the word such as, connections, connectedness, interconnectedness, interconnections, etc. In the earlier quotes discussing the definition of social studies many phrases were uttered in a common allusion to what these participants deemed as an essential characteristic of social studies education, regardless of what specific subject one is teaching. These phrases included the following: *individual pieces, just all get woven together, bridge across, ties a lot of things together, all encompassing, connections between the physical sciences or the core content classes, help them make connections, incorporating, bringing in (as in adding to or introducing), and who we are as groups or as a community.* These social studies educators all used the notion of connection when describing the purpose of social studies, their role as a social studies educator as well as their expectations with regard to their students acquiring the ability to not only recognize the existence of connections but also to seek out and create connections between concepts, ideas, events, and people as well as
across time and space. Elizabeth described the purpose of social studies as an interdisciplinary connector by stating:

I mean the environmental concerns with business practices and are they being correct in how they operate? I mean that ties in econ, that ties in social ethics, that ties in political theories, economic theories and it takes a bridge across to your environmental sciences and what’s our responsibility as citizens. So, I think its just the one that lends itself most to all of the other subjects so kids can see ‘oh, okay, so I have to be a good citizen in order to do these things.’

Here there is the recognition of the economic-socio-political-ecological issues within social studies content and specifically associated with being a good citizen. That is, the recognition that there are multiple themes and complex connections associated with understanding the responsibilities of citizenship. This natural interdisciplinary characteristic allows teachers the opportunity to connect their content to an abundance of ideas, concepts and even illustrative examples gleaned from numerous academic and real life sources. This provides them with the opportunity to make their connections relevant to the learner, their topic and the current events/issues often associated with other subjects or areas of study. This connecting also occurs within social studies courses, such as history; Bert illustrated this while discussing the significance of history and interconnectedness:

Well, I think we certainly can make it relevant to the history material that we’ve covered. You know, why is Africa poor? Well, it’s poor because of you know, industrialism, imperialism, and now this further system of globalization. You know, what’s the natural outcome? Let’s look at some
of these outcomes from the Cold War. Let’s look at some of these outcomes from social events. So, you know, you make those connections.

To address the current world issue of poverty in Africa, Bert suggests analyzing outcomes across time and space by linking the past, present and the future simultaneously with various global geographic regions. The ability to make connections and as Ernie coined it “to think about the Big Picture” was an essential characteristic of social studies education, regardless of the type of social studies course being taught. This characteristic was most often cited in reference to some type of history course, most likely as a result of the perceived inherent spatial and temporal components associated with teaching history.

Below Taylor described how she would like her students to think:

…Think of how it is relating to the next part of history. Like try to keep that thread going through each thing because that, I think, makes the whole picture. It’s not just we’re studying this and then we’re studying this and then we’re studying this. I try to make it look (like) this is the whole thing so let’s try to bring this all together. How do these all relate to each other? How do they connect?

… It’s not all about the content. I don’t think there is anything specific, but if you can just kind of get the big picture of how this is all connecting.

Here Taylor described relating and threading events together in order to gain an understanding of the whole picture and the purpose in studying history, a question often asked by young students struggling to understand their own immediate world, in addition to the past. This student sentiment was shared by all of the participants. Social studies as a approach, in the minds of these educators, was viewed as a connector between other fields of study and issues such as business, social ethics, mathematics, and environmental
science. Likewise, the discipline itself was seen as interconnected, in that it draws upon and interweaves connections through its own set of fields including history, economics, government/civics, geography, political science, psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc. Though often taught as separate courses the participants did not conceptualize them as mutually exclusive, except in the previously reported case of Elizabeth, when she was asked to address their individual goals and objectives. This finding of connectedness raises the question of the complexity of social studies and therefore, lacking a clear identity within its own discipline as well as in relation to others. On the other hand, its interconnectedness could also be interpreted as relevant and applicable to the current state of society and the world, therefore providing and opportunity for it to strengthen its role in creating citizens with a better understanding of the complex world they live in and their subsequent civic responsibilities.

Teacher as connector

Viewing social studies as a connector examines the role of the discipline itself. What also began to emerge was a more active role on the part of the teacher making the connections and modeling how this can be achieved. This would eventually lead to the act of connecting as a desired goal for the students to achieve. Elizabeth discussed using visual tools to assess as well as enable her students to make connections:

I need to make sure that they’ve got it. … ‘Okay, do you get what’s going on?’ So they’re going to do a real quick mini portrait on the board. We’ve got China, Japan, Korea, India. Just give me brief facts. What’s going on in these countries and then color anything red that has to go with the cold war so they can visualize that and connect it. Anything you can do to help them connect it.
The creation of a color-coded chart allowed the students and herself to see and ensure the sought after connections between geographic places and an historical era were indeed made. The teachers often took an active role in facilitating and/or declaring the connection between concepts, places and time. Taylor spoke of her interactive role with students by asking them to:

‘Think about the thread that brought all of us together.’ Like why are we learning this? How has one resulted into another? The whole concept of cause and effect type of thing. So when I say connections that’s what I really want them to do. I want them to see the big picture, not just … ‘oh we’re studying the French Revolution.’ I want them to move on and see how those all connect together. Or how the Industrial Revolution led us into Imperialism, and how that idea of imperialism was good and bad. You know it did industrialize some of those third world countries but when they left they really didn’t do anything to help them out. …I want them to be able to see why they are learning these different things.

She stated she would assist the students by asking leading questions and encouraging them to see the links and recognize the significance of understandings, such as the influence of power on the marginalization of others throughout history. Recognizing the importance of understanding the various systems provided responses from both Marie and Elizabeth, which alluded to it as a complex and cumulative synthesizing process, that is, as they moved further along in their education these understandings would occur.

Elizabeth: …that’s why history is so hard because it’s not just black and white with understanding like an algebra equation. You can plug in X and Y and 3,4,5,6 all over the place but you cannot…(pauses) its still going to give you that same outcome no matter what the formula. But with social
studies and history, there are just so many different dimensions of understanding and understanding governmental or economic shifts and why people do that. There’s just so much.

They both also commented on the age and developmental level of their 9th grade students.

Marie: I think their understanding of the systems would come at a later time, when they’ve got [the] fundamentals. Then as they get older and they start to mature and they know how the system works, the political system, or the economic system, or the social system, or your role in how all that it, they get a better understanding of this as they get older.

Elizabeth: …I guess you’re thinking three dimensionally like “this is my basic idea and I can apply it on these different levels” and I think kids just have a hard time because they’re developmentally at that point in their life where “this is what happens to me now” and that’s all they can see…

For them the role of being the connector was essential due to what they believed were their student’s capacities to understand based upon the developmental stage for their age. They both noted that as they become juniors and seniors they were more likely to be able to grasp the complexity involved in understanding the interaction between and among systems. On the other hand Elizabeth stated:

…nothings ever black and white, everything is gray, so you can at least help them to understand the world that they’re living in and how they fit in to it or might fit into it. They appreciate that and they appreciate you talking to them like an adult instead of (whispering) ‘I’m just a little high school kid’.
There was recognition among the participants that their students appreciated being viewed as capable of understanding the complexities of the world they live in and their place in the big picture. Connecting content with other disciplines and/or areas of study, connecting and/or including content from the other social studies disciplines, connecting content with current issues and problems occurring in the world, locally, nationally and globally, connecting events, ideas and people across space and time, making connections between and among the various systems/dimensions throughout the natural and social world, are all conceptualized by the teachers in this study as essential goals in social studies, whether considered as a whole or as one of the specialized courses it embodies.

**Students as connectors – ultimate goal**

Another significant and perhaps the ultimate goal/objective of the connective capabilities of social studies was to facilitate the development of the student as connector, thereby taking an active role in the practice of connecting. Since this study took place during the last quarter of the year I was offered the opportunity to witness and discuss with the teachers why and how some of them went about *bringing it all together*. Three of them chose to make this their year ending goal/objective and one of the others spoke about her desire to move toward this type of a cumulative project in her next year’s global studies course. The differentiation of this from social studies and/or the teacher as connector emerged out of the comparisons between the interview analyses and the analyses of what transpired in the classrooms, specifically the assessments of student learning. These analyses provided ample evidence of both passive (teachers as connectors) and active (students as connectors) illustrations of connecting. The teachers,
when discussing the assessment, both formal and informal/reflective, of their student’s learning highlighted the importance of connection making on the part of the student. Ernie said this about the final project for his and Bert’s Government class, the White Paper:

So this is what, they’re learning, doing and demonstrating. I mean this, this to me is the.. I mean this is probably the best thing I’ve ever done educationally. Because it is what I’ve always believed that students should be. It’s like taking knowledge, turning it over, owning it in such a way that they feel like they have a connection to it, and then doing something authentic with it, and I wish to God I could… I want to keep like taking this concept and keep applying it to like every other project that I do, like okay, its not, that you do this, so that… It’s now that you know this, what do you do with it? So I think that the white paper is demonstrating pure, I mean scholarship, I think that’s what scholarship is supposed to be, so the learning, doing and demonstrating. See them learning by doing and demonstrating and I love that. And the connections that they make are really impressive, really, really impressive.

Ernie expressed the concept of connection by describing a sense of ownership and connection to the work itself as well as the amount of connections within the work. By learning, doing and demonstrating as he described the student’s come to an understanding of how everything they had worked on up to that point led to the creation of a final product representative of an entire year’s worth of effort. The sentiment of putting together all of the functional skills and connections was shared also by Bert as he described the final assessment project, Design a Sustainable World, assigned in the World Studies course taken earlier in the year.
…Political factors, economic factors, social factors, cultural factors, we’re looking at our globalizing world, making sure that our kids understand it. I’d say in terms of college readiness it’s an authentic presentation.

…really, looking at a problem, looking at potential solutions.

This extensive application of skills and understandings allowed students to focus on a real world issue/problem such as poverty, research it, then create potentially viable solutions and present them to a “real” audience of community members. The goal of students gaining an understanding of how all of those factors interact with each other and the effects of these interactions was common among all of the participants. Marie had this to say about her motivation to create an end of the year assessment:

   I really wanted them to make the connections from the past to the present, pure and simple. I teach history, so they get the relevance of it, and if you look at rigor and relevance, and you’re building relationships with the students you want them to understand that history is significant, the past is important. You’ve (the student) got to make the connections. It’s better than a paper test. It’s a true assessment, I think because they actually have to make the connections and that’s why that motivated me.

Her reference to rigor, relevance and relationships addressed her school’s educational philosophy and form the framework for identifying and creating connections in all academic disciplines, as well as in life. The comprehensive application of skills and connecting of various systems across time and space addressed through these projects will be discussed more extensively in a latter part of these findings.

   The objective of the students making the connections also occurred during the classroom observations, specifically when the teachers were discussing the expectations
of a particular assignment or activity. Notably interesting was a shift in this emphasis during the course of actual classroom instruction where more often the teachers would identify the connections or lead them right to them. This demonstrated a gap between what they said they wanted, students taking an active role in making connections, and what they did, making the connections for the students or leading them directly to them. Reasons for this include the barrier of time and/or quantity of information that needed to be covered, since teachers felt rushed to move along, therefore not providing the space for students to make the connections. Marie, however, stated she spent the year making the connections for the students and now it was their turn, her efforts throughout the year were more about modeling multiple perspectives and identifying the connections.

*Story as a connector – a vehicle for making connections*

Connectedness is also associated with the concept of *story*, used often by the participants, when discussing their interest and their student’s interest in social studies as a discipline, their pedagogical practices in social studies as well as describing social studies itself as the “story of life”, as Marie did in her first interview. Though story is defined as piece of fiction that narrates a chain of related events, the significance of its use as a connector of ideas, people, events, time and place by social studies teachers indicates its value as well as its relevance to the permeating theme of connections. Elizabeth while sharing what appealed to her about social studies stated:

> I like the story. I like that I can imagine it all in my head. I can take these people and these characters and even though they had already a plot set out for them that it was just this imaginary place that was (whispering), well, what if it didn’t go this way? What if Napoleon had done something
different or what if the south would have won?... this isn’t a story, these are real people, but its ‘their story’.

The appeal toward interactions and a sense of connectedness do not only occur in a historical context; they are also publicly enacted daily on various stages and arenas and the assorted forms of media and experiences students are exposed to both within and outside of the classroom. In a purposeful effort to engage students to look at the current democratic system, Ernie, while reflecting upon an interactive role playing lesson, discussed the “drama” involved in the political process: “…and once you start to realize that these people have names and they stand for different things and they fight against each other, its actually a drama. “I wonder what is going on in the Senate today?, You know and you read the newspaper and you’re looking for names and you’re looking…and educating yourself…” The connecting of people, ideas and events in the current context and throughout history moves to another more complex level when the construct of human relationships becomes part of the discourse. Through an what at first appears to be an anthropocentric perspective, which focuses only on people, Bert discussed the significance of seeing and identifying with interactional relationships as a pathway for appealing to student’s interests when he stated:

If they don’t hear it as a story, they don’t hear it because it’s not about the people. History is a study of people with historical facts, that’s all it is, the study of people in a historical context. So just talk about the people, talk about dynamics, talk about relationships, talk about things that other human beings can identify with. Now once they understand there’s a connection of dynamics then they can move into, okay these facts happen.
One, they can retain it more and two, its far more engaging and interesting.

Bert’s emphasis on dynamics, relationships and identification are concepts all closely aligned with connectedness. His contention that students will only be interested if the story involves people is part of the story. Therefore, his emphasis on relationships and relevancy creates a space for the examination of other dynamic relationships, such as place and ecological connections. They all speak to the complexity of the interactions between people and the environments and systems in which they live their lives. Ernie, while discussing the book, *Global Health Narratives: A Reader for Youth*, which he had received as a gift at the end of the school year, noted the immediate relevance of its content for his history course mastery learning assessment called the “Design a Sustainable World” (DSW) project. (Appendix H)

So they’re stories and some of them are fiction, some of them, some of them are fiction based on fact, and some of them are fact-based stories.… Sometimes the names have been changed, sometimes they haven’t, but they all have to do with the Millennium Development Goals, every one of them. Maternal health, poverty, gender issues, goal partnerships, you know environmental sustainability, it’s wonderful. And I couldn’t have chosen a better thing for my classroom than those books. I have leafed through them. … I have looked at the table of contents and said, my goodness, this is perfect.

For Ernie the “stories” whether fiction or non-fiction were related to real issues in the current world, therefore they were relevant to his students and the topics they were choosing to address in their projects. These social studies teachers all valued on a
personal level and espoused the use of narrative in their conceptualizations of their social studies practices. Through the discussion of diverse topics, events, issues, etc and the “things that other human beings can identify with”, they are moving beyond human connectedness into other connections that address with what is happening in and around the world of a student.

**Habits of the Heart and Mind “What do we want them to be able to do?”**

How teachers conceptualize social studies can also be addressed through the identification of what it is teachers want their students *to be able to do* upon completion of their particular social studies course. This section will focus upon the confluent emotive, cognitive and behavioral competencies, which emerged as essential by the participants. They will be referred to as “habits of the heart and mind”, a phrase common to many in the educational reform efforts, such as the Coalition of Essential Schools. The “habits” are dispositions, which are used to facilitate a person’s ability to interact with problems, situations and people, enabling them to process the interactions in an effective and successful manner. They are what intelligent people do when the resolution to a problem is not instantly evident (Costa and Kallick, 2000) During the first interview the teachers were asked to define social studies as well as discuss what they believed their students should learn and be able to do upon completion of their course. In the later, less structured interviews, these desired/sought after aptitudes emerged in a variety of contexts and illustrations. Though the participants taught a variety of courses and grade/skill levels, such as global studies/world history, world cultures, American government, honors and regular, freshmen through seniors, I found a consistent emphasis
across all of the participants with regard to these aptitudes. This was true even though, in some cases the teacher chose to respond by discussing a specific course such as Global Studies/World History. Through coding and constant comparison throughout the data analysis phase, multiple sub-categories of these habits/skills emerged. Since this area of the findings is specifically addressing the conceptualizations of the social studies teachers, the evidence focuses only on the structured, semi-structured interviews and post-observational discussions. Further evidence will be discussed in the second part of this chapter examining the interactions and practices enacted by the participants.

**Variance in perception of skills - College/professional/life skills**

The initial interview with all of the participants focused primarily on their conceptualizations of the goals of social studies. Upon analysis of all of the data, it became clear that skill/habit development was an essential component both conceptually and enacted within the classroom. I feel it is important to note and below, that there were differences in the purpose as well as the terminology among the participant’s conceptualizations of these skills. The differences were most notable between Bert and Ernie’s conceptions, at Humboldt Academy, and the others, Marie and Elizabeth at Carson High School and Taylor at Zimmerman High School. These differences were most likely attributed to the environment, purpose and philosophy of their school programs described at the end of Chapter Three. In identifying and discussing the variance in the terminology used by each of the participants, my intent was to provide the individual conceptualizations in order to set the context for the synthesizing of the skills. These skills were then placed into categories, which emerged from the data and
correlated at varying degrees with the skills necessary to create and live in a sustainable world.

For Bert and Ernie, skills appeared to be explicit and consistently reiterated, whereas for Marie, Elizabeth and Taylor, the desired skills were less explicit and reinforced, though clearly an important aspect of their conceptualizations and classroom/lesson practices. Ernie and Bert felt strongly, working as a collaborative team, that skill development was a foundational goal, both from a school mission perspective as well a teaching team. It was apparent from the onset that they had planned and reflected upon the skills they found to be imperative for their students to obtain. Early on in their planning they identified seven skills all centered upon what they referred to as “college” or “professional skills”. They include: 1. Critical thought, 2. Technological literacy, 3. Thesis development, 4. Self-management, 5. Source analysis, 6. Data analysis, and 7. Presentation skills. They were listed in every unit overview presented to their students and mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews, though others would appear in their discourse and classroom behaviors. Their goal of preparing their students to be college ready with the professional skills necessary to be successful in the business world was evident and reinforced throughout the interviews and classroom observations. Ernie and Bert described the students as intellectually curious and motivated to work toward achieving collegiate success, which was evident because they had applied to attend the academy.

The other three participants did not identify either college or professional readiness as primary goals or skills. Marie, when asked: “Can you pinpoint or describe any specific things or skills that you feel your students should have?”, responded by
stating: “Well, you know, study skills in preparing for life and other things like that. I think that those are just universal ones and my goal next year is to really emphasize that a lot more.” She would later go on to describe the study skills as “organizational” by explaining: “So, I would say organizational skills whether their in my Global or my Honors, it's something that I think transcends whether they're going on to college or whether an auto mechanic or an Ag diesel or a lawman or a repairman. You've got to have some sort of an organizational skill to succeed.” Through the verbalization process, she started out describing study or life skills, then moved toward an emphasis on “organizational” skills, while illustrating a variety of settings in which these would be deemed necessary for success. Taylor’s conceptualization of the necessary skills emerged as study skills and citizenship skills or one’s “civic obligation and duty to go out and learn what this issue is about.” Her terminology use corresponded to the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) skills standards when she stated: “…like learning the difference between credible and reliable sources and knowing how to cite things and give people the credit that came up with it.” Lastly, Elizabeth’s terminology was more non-specific and centered mostly on “open-mindedness” and a willingness to be open to new ideas, things and people. She believes: “I think people just need to be, with regard to what I teach both for global history and for world cultures, they just need to be open-minded, they need to have a mind that’s willing to learn new things, accept new things that are different from themselves.” Though she did not specifically identify a set of skills she found to be important in this instance, as evidenced in future examples, she valued and emphasized a variety of skills to be obtained by her students through her lessons and classroom interactions.
These diverse conceptualizations of the type and purpose of social studies skills reflect a broad interpretation and raises many questions, including: What is the role of social studies? Is it designed to support a capitalist/worker driven, power driven or cosmopolitan oriented employee/citizen? Or a little of all three? How then are their initial conceptualizations so divergent? And does this damage the perception and role of social studies? The analysis of these valued skills and dispositions that I refer to as habits of the heart and mind, bore four categorizations, which demonstrate a broader and more inclusive characterization of the skills and competencies, they included functional thinking, critical thinking, creative thinking and socio-emotional/tive.

**Functional or practical skills**

The classification of functional skills derived through the repeated emphasis for college, workplace and citizenship readiness voiced explicitly by Ernie and Bert and implicitly, through Marie, Elizabeth and Taylor’s narratives and everyday practices. These include both written and verbal communication, collaboration and cooperative learning, technological literacy, and organization and structure competencies. Functional skills facilitate further learning, adaptability and the application of knowledge. They are also transferable from one area to another, in this instance from educational to professional. Both Ernie and Bert perceived as one of their primary roles specific to their position in the alternative school setting was “to make sure these kids are ready for college” and professional careers. They both stated that they believed this to be one of the fundamental goals of the Humboldt Academy, therefore, felt obligated to these skills
were acquired. Ernie while expressing what he expected his students to be able to do stated:

That means that they’ve got to be able to think well. They’ve got to be able to speak well. They’ve got to be able to write well. They’ve got to be able to conceptualize thesis development, and quite honestly they’ve got to be able to work well, which means that they’ve got to be equipped with online collaborative tools, they’ve got to be able to use software to that impress their boss. They’ve got to be indispensible for a company.

Within his description lies a further breakdown of these skills as well as some of the others discussed later in this finding. Specifically, he identified the ability to communicate well both written and verbal, the ability to organization one’s thoughts and actions, the ability to work with others, and a level of technological proficiency. All of the participants emphasized the importance of functional skills, though they were not always explicitly stated.

Communication – written and verbal

The ability to effectively communicate through written and verbal mechanisms were viewed as essential skills both professionally and in everyday social interactions. All of the participants, in a variety of contexts, emphasized the importance of their students being able to effectively clarify and express their ideas to a variety of audiences. The most common form communication expressed was through classroom discussions. In these contexts the teachers all noted the importance of both effectively verbalizing ideas and opinions as well as listening to others express theirs. Demonstrating proficient skills in creating persuasive and dynamic exhibitions of their work were primary objectives of
both Ernie and Bert. Examples of these include authentic presentations and authentic applications to audiences of stakeholders and implementers. Ernie specifically stated this about his government class,

… it is about teaching students the tools to bring government down to their level, how to like not be afraid of it, and how to make connections and communicate with people in power. How to throw the levers of power to get what you want…

The White Paper project Ernie and Bert’s students must complete, to demonstrate mastery, allowed them to write and/or request support for legislation and policy changes in such areas as increasing the minimum wage, supporting structural changes to give women more educational opportunities and increasing the funding for clean water projects in other parts of the world. Both believe citizens who can articulate their wants and needs, both personally and structurally, and make their voices heard are on the pathway toward creating change. This was one of the key differences between Bert and Ernie and the other participants. The other three teachers perceived and discussed the benefits of presentations and writing proficiency within the classroom context, as a general skill to be gained in order to demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge and comprehension of the specific content studied. On the other hand, all of their practices demonstrated support for these skills and will be discussed in the section of these findings, which addresses what was observed and implemented in their classrooms.

It is interesting to note, the explicit versus implicit ideation of the skills and competencies and raises the question of the effect this may have on students.

Collaboration and cooperative learning
The ability to work successfully with others as a member of a team or small group was envisioned by all of the teachers as an essential competency. The opportunity to experience a creative process, share diverse perspectives, and forge new relationships can all develop from the collaborative process. The complexity of the issues, such as poverty and healthcare, facing current students and citizens require the motivation to seek and the ability to work well with diverse ideas and people. Perceptions concerning collaboration ranged from discussing scenarios in which they highlighted the benefits of students working with others, to the crucial role collaboration played in their own status as teachers, to the possibilities of collaboration as a tool on a global scale. Marie shared this about her efforts to collaborate with her students: “I sat down with every single kid and walked them through to make sure they were on track.” The guidance and support she gave her students as they began working on their end of the year projects was perceived as a collaborative effort on the part of the teacher and student to clarify and compose a successful representation of what they had learned.

Taylor spoke of the importance of students to “hold each other accountable” while working together and not allowing someone to “not do their part”. She expressed her motives in encouraging her students to find solutions and understandings with their peers rather than relying on her to provide them. She also recognized the value of being able to work with her teaching peers when she stated:

…then it was just working out those objectives around how it was all going to plan out. So it was helpful having a sounding board, working with another teacher, working with Andrea and bouncing ideas off of each other. That kind of helped with the logistics and that was a very simple lesson, we can definitely get more complicated and in depth.
Taylor and an English teacher, collaborated and created a lesson using GPS devices to simulate the competition between the Soviets and the US during the Cold War. This was a new technology and lesson, which neither of them had previously implemented, therefore their mutual support provided an opportunity to nurture both confidence and creativity in the implementation of the lesson. It also modeled for the students the act of collaborating, as well as demonstrating that the subject matter of two different teachers could be combined to create a valuable learning experience.

Bert explained how purposefully limiting the choices available for his student’s World History mastery project, Designing a Sustainable World, facilitated a collaborative learning environment: “…you want a good chunk of kids doing similar ones because it’s not a group project, but there’s a lot of cooperative learning that can take place if kids are doing similar MDGs (topics)...if you only have 4 different goals to choose from ...there is “going to be some good dynamics there.” The “good dynamics” he spoke of included an increased opportunity for students to work with a variety of other students who had selected the same Millennium Development Goal (MDG) topic. Ernie expressed the potential for students to create “change” in their world through working with others and deliberating courses of action. He compared this to the immense potential to solve a global crisis such as climate change through a collaboration between the US and China to “compete” as leading nations in addressing this challenge.

This finding, which supports accountability, interconnectedness, deliberation, competition and cooperation between and among students teachers and world powers,
was also acknowledged as a essential 21st century skill by all of the participants and efforts to increase opportunities for it to occur in meaningful ways was a universal goal.

**Technological skills – technological literacy**

The ability to acquire and use current information and communication technologies (software, hardware, methods, etc.) as well as to be able to understand and appropriately evaluate technology are separate yet interconnected competencies. The pace of technological advances, privacy, access, job competiveness, and intellectual property rights are just a few of the current issues that can be addressed through the inclusion of technological literacy as a functional skill/habit of the mind. Collaboration through technology such as blogs, Google documents and maps are some of the examples Ernie alluded to when he stated the importance of students to be “able to interact and interface with digital resources.” It was identified by all of the participants as another essential functional skill or set of skills necessary for all students to attain. These skills include finding and applying information from digital resources, applying digital tools, such as creating documents and presentations and the adoption of a critical lens regarding the content found online. The participants were all well aware of their student’s seemingly “natural” or innate competencies and interest regarding “all things technological”. Likewise, they were also recognized the student’s lack of respect and understanding of how to efficiently and responsibly use such skills to facilitate their own learning. Elizabeth had this to say:

The kids are good at finding stuff, but they’re not good at finding quality, or reliable, or educational, do you know what I mean? It needs to be meaningful. Like, I know it’s great that kids have all this technology out
there but we need to be the filter on how do you use it, what’s the best way to use it, what is acceptable, what is not acceptable behavior when you are using it.

The task of guiding students toward the best and right ways to use technology proved to be challenging for most of the participants since they found themselves struggling to be fully apprised of the perpetual changes associated with the technologies their own students seemed able to master instantly. Taylor noted the potential of using technology as a teaching tool when she stated: “…when they have technology around them they just seem to really become engaged.” Her concern, more so than the others, was her schools lack of access to technology, noting the lack of smartboards, projectors and computers in the classrooms and an overbooked computer lab. She felt strongly that the students should seek out available resources on their own and stated what her expectations of her students included:

Use your resources, whatever those resources are. Go out and use them. Don’t depend on someone to just constantly be giving you this information. I guess that’s the biggest thing is go out and seek the answer using whatever resources are available and learn technology. Technology is really big and even though they don’t have access to a lot of it through the school, technology does not have to be an iPhone.

All of the participants recognized the value of their students acquiring theses skills and seeking out their resources in order to acquire a sense of autonomy for their own learning, Also referred to as digital literacy and described as a fundamental 21st Century skill, the teachers all recognized and felt a responsibility toward reinforcing its importance upon the students as well providing opportunities for them to utilize and apply these skills.
This finding raises the question of equity and access, they recognized it was not enough to learn or understand the importance of these skills, but that practicing them was essential and for many of their student’s access was a notable barrier. Also, an important question would be whether a critical lens was being used to deliberate the impacts, both short and long term, of such an emphasis on technology as the answer or solution to the current and future issues the world faces.

Organization and structure

The final functional habit of the mind identified by the participants in this study was the development of good organizational skills. An awareness of the increasing complexity and rigor in their student’s current and future lives was an area of concern and emphasis conceptualized explicitly by some of the participants and implicitly in the actions of the others. Skills such as outlining, collecting and researching data, time management, prioritizing, understanding structure, checklists, etc. were emphasized. Marie shared a scenario, which described her vision of how organizational skills would help a student when she shared:

Let’s say a kid inherits a heating and cooling company. That kid needs to be able to look at… you can’t just take these pieces and build, you have to have structure and organization. You have to have an idea of what …widget A goes to widget B to widget C and then the more he does it he’ll build upon his history, his knowledge, just like our history, to indicate how much time it’s going to take him in the future, what indications. So, he’ll use his past to understand how long it will take him to complete a job on his next assignment…. So, I would see organizational skills whether they’re my Global or my Honors, it’s something that I think
transcends whether they’re going to on to college or whether an auto mechanic or an Ag diesel or a lawman or a repairman. You’ve got to have some sort of organization skill to succeed.

Organizing skills and their relationship to how a student could use their past as well as other’s, demonstrated how history and knowledge could help facilitate such a skill. Another component of this skill was the reinforcement and understanding of processes and repetition, such as in outlining, which would transfer to other areas such as science, math and even English. Bert and Ernie saw these skills as crucial to collecting and researching data and information and constructing well-supported arguments. An organizational tool created by Bert and endorsed by Ernie involved a checklist:

If you give kids a checklist of content or skills then what you are able to do is then, they can do much more of their own construction of meaning. “okay, well I understand these pieces so what am I going to do with this now?” I think I was talking about doing more and more and more turning over the conceptualization of mastery and the design of projects into students hand more open-ended projects. Like, “I’ll make sure you know the stuff, now you come up with a project to show you’re a professional learner.” I think I do support the use of the checklist tool, not as an end to itself but as a benchmark to make sure you are ready to go to the next step, which is of the course the demonstration of mastery.

The checklist served as an organizational tool designed to hold the student’s accountable and allowed them to see and construct what they have learned throughout the lessons. This moved them toward building mastery of the topic. It was also used as an infrastructure for designing their mastery project.
This finding reflects the perception that the ability to design or develop a *schema* was viewed as foundational to developing the ability to process and address the increasing complexity students encounter. Organizational tools were utilized by and for both the students and the teachers, thereby reinforcing the value of having them become part of their set of functional skills necessary for 21st century students to acquire and employ.

All of the functional habits/skills identified and practiced by the participants, whether articulated as life skills, professional skills, or just practical, are making their way into established educational reform efforts such as the Partnership for 21st Century skills Framework for 21st Century Learning (P21.org, 2011).

**Critical thinking skills**

This section begins by discussing what the participants referred to as “critical thinking skills” in a broader context, incorporating a variety of terms utilized by the participants. Critical thinking skills are most commonly discussed and grouped in education through the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. They include remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. The use of the concept *critical thinking skills* can be applied to a variety of cognitive abilities and is often used, as it is in this study by the participants, to describe the ability to use reasoning as well as to think about thinking, question assumptions and asking questions framed in such a manner in order to employ the expression *yes, but.*
This finding indicates this is not a prescriptive process; rather it is more of a mediated progression toward facilitating a student’s ability to learn how to think. Bert summed up the process of developing critical thinking skills by stating:

I want them to be critical thinkers and I want them to get a bunch of different sources, and then I tell them I’m there to teach them how to think more than I teach them what to think.

Bert’s emphasis on “how” illustrates his perception of the act of thinking as a process, as opposed to a body of knowledge. All of the participants believed that by giving the students an opportunity and the encouragement to explore and question each other’s assumptions as well as assumptions made by others, such as through textbook readings, the news, peers, family, popular culture and the media in general, enables students to view their world with a broader more well-informed perspective. Taylor envisioned it as a “civic obligation and duty to go out and learn what an issue is about”, thereby applying the skills they have learned to actively seek out and question information rather than to “depend on someone to constantly be giving you information.” By specifically not relying on their parents, their peers and their teachers. Along similar lines, is the ability to discern what are credible and reliable sources and what are not, based upon a set of criteria that encourages the reader to ask questions and seek multiple sources for substantiation.

Critical thinking skills were also viewed as essential in assessing historical as well as current issues and events in global studies/world history. Elizabeth spoke of her use of critical thinking and questioning by asking her students to “think about responsible war,
what does that mean?” This enabled them to question the use of that terminology in their textbook in reference to the building up of the two nuclear powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. By asking the students “why were they doing that?” and how were they being “responsible” they began to question the amount of money being spent and the impact it had on other areas of their societies. This would often lead to a discussion of current actions and issues, with the students questioning both her and the political, social, and economic decisions being made. Digging deeper beneath an issue, whether its context is historical or current has perhaps always been considered a valuable skill; however, with technological advances assisting in the ability to seek and explore an infinite amount of information from an infinite number of sources, the ability to critically assess and question are crucial. Bert would later reiterate:

We’re not telling them exactly what to think, we’re trying to teach them how to think because they’re going to be facing situations which we don’t know about… it’s those critical thinking skills that we’re most concerned about.

The eventual goal is to become critically thinking citizens. These thinking skills described in their broadest sense encourage students to gather information, assess it and eventually apply it to their decision-making processes. The students’ nearly constant exposure to local, regional, national and global issues through a variety of mediums including social media and 24/7 news access as well as in the school setting provides a potentially overwhelming amount of information and ideas, which these competencies will better enable them to address. Since the content and context of their future decisions
is unknown yet increasing in complexity, they will be challenged to apply these skills in order to create their future as well as the future of those yet to come.

This finding uncovered the consternation experienced by the teachers as a result of delving into controversial issues, both historical and current. Some were quick to declare their efforts to remain and portray their objectiveness, yet others were open to sharing their personal perspectives with the students based upon the perceived relationships that had been established and the recognition that education is not neutral. They believed the level of mutual respect enabled the students to know they could take or leave what the teacher was expressing in those circumstances. Thus, there was a dichotomy between wanting to encourage mindful critical thought and the potential for value-laden expression resulting in crossing the line. The remainder of this section will discuss some of the broader, thinking skills the participants described as essential for their students to acquire.

*Creative thinking skills*

The desire for their students to develop and implement their ability to think creatively was found to exist with all of the teachers throughout both the interviews and the teacher’s classroom practices. Globalization, through technology and trade, has introduced students to a diversity of ideas, issues, products, experiences, perspectives, problems, options, etc. never before encountered and will continue to do so throughout the rest of their lives. Creative thinking encourages student’s to imagine, create and consider alternative and desired outcomes to the unique issues and opportunities brought about through the complex interconnections of our globalized world. Creative thinking
skills, unlike many of the functional and critical thinking habits are less structured and more open-ended. They are also generative, diffuse and flexible and are in tune with the response *Yes, and*. They include concepts such as open-mindedness, flexibility, multiple-perspectives, solution-seeking, out of the box thinking and brainstorming.

**Open-mindedness – Flexibility**

“To have a mind that’s willing to learn new things, try new things, accept new things that are different from themselves.” This reflection by Elizabeth, sums up very poignantly what most of the teachers referred to as open-mindedness or adaptability. The ability and willingness to espouse the possibility and probability that there are new, unexplored and diverse ideas, people, solutions, etc. *out there* was considered indispensable as a skill when considering the dynamic complexity and diversity in the world. Adaptability as a cultural trait, specifically, concerned Ernie when discussing the US’s reaction to global conditions, “I’m a big Friedmanite\(^2\) and I believe that we haven’t done a very good job in the last 25 years of adapting to (pauses) ever since the ’73 oil crisis, to the new reality of the world, get smart, get small and adapt. We haven’t been doing that.” The ability to consider a new way of thinking and adapting to the changes occurring throughout the world were recognized as essential skills. Likewise, it was believed, the students needed to understand the significance of these skills and put them into practice in their current lives as well as their future.

\(^2\) Reference to Thomas Friedman, author of a number of publications advocating the, often overlooked, significance of globalization’s effect on the complex, interconnected world, specifically the “flattening of the world”. He also advocates the necessity for individuals to become “an untouchable ... people whose jobs cannot be outsourced, digitized, or automated” stating “the future won’t wait for us, and if we don’t invent it, someone else will” (Charles, http://www.hyperink.com/Commentary-And-Summary-b1267a12)

Not the (more common) reference to the US economist, Milton Friedman, associated with monetarism and free market capitalism.
Perspective taking – multiple perspectives

The ability and desire to recognize the existence of and to seek multiple perspectives was found to be an important aspect of social studies education by all of the participants. I placed this competency in with creative thinking habits because it is an often-subconscious process, which occurs in varying degrees in nearly all instances of the acquisition of new information as well as in social interactions. Wondering what someone else may be thinking about a particular idea, event, interaction, etc. can be an essential skill in developing an awareness of the existence of alternative points of view and an eventual deeper level of understanding such as empathy and perspective consciousness. The participants felt the students needed to understand that their own point of view, their peers, their parents as well as those reported through the media on an issue or event were not the only perspectives to be considered, including instances in which there was a retelling a first hand experience. For Elizabeth in describing history it was as simple as: “it’s all the same story, its just a different perspective”, adding complexity by emphasizing the value of each “voice”, as well as the analysis of the context through which it was framed. Exposing the students to the multiple voices and versions of both historical and current events and issues, such as the factory owner and the factory worker’s perspectives during the Industrial Revolution extending through today.

Marie reflected upon a story she had shared with her students concerning some of their classmates, one in particular whom they all knew, who had been bullied and referred to as “retarded”. After much discussion and sharing of a video made by the bullied students she noted they were “better citizens, better students, better persons as a result of
the exposure to other perspectives.” She shared that her students said they just had never considered their point of view until they had actually heard the bullied students address them and then processed it through class discussion. In his diverse classroom setting, Ernie noted the value of sharing by stating: “I like that students get exposed to each other in different ways. They get exposed to other perspectives and viewpoints I mean its so rich as a teacher that when its not there I think a reflective teacher really feels the absence of it.” If the teacher feels the absence of it one would have to question the impact its absence would have upon the students. Another aspect of this competency included the ability to be able to listen to and seek out different points of view before making a judgment or decision. The identification and assessment of what was referred to as the “pros and cons” of an issue, regardless of where the student’s perspective initially was placed, this skill would enable them, through a set process, to explore other perspectives and make more well informed decisions now and in the future. Ernie summed up the value of experiencing multiple perspectives for both students and teachers when he stated: “I think that one of the big parts of education is when you get to reflect on your own perspective because you are faced with the other (perspective).” The ability to contemplate one’s own view as a result of experiencing other points of view enables students to examine their own beliefs and subsequent decision-making.

Each of the participant’s schools had a diverse school culture, racially, ethnically and socio-economically, likewise each of them had expressed valuing the opportunity to work in such a diverse setting. Their diverse school environment was an essential element in seeking and respecting multiple perspectives. A few of them acknowledged their lack of exposure to diversity throughout their own experiences as students and shared a sense
of “missing out”. Thus, their current experiences served to provide daily learning and teaching moments for both themselves and their students. Though these teachers recognize this as essential, the question must be raised, to what extent? And how reflective are they in their understandings? Most also shared that they felt they had very little “real” preparation in dealing with diversity, therefore it may be, they don’t know, what they don’t know.

**Problem solving aka solution seeking- critical and creative**

The teachers discussed the importance of identifying and addressing issues relevant to both the present and the past through the student’s ability to use various strategies to solve problems and seek solutions. An example of this was shared during Taylor’s third interview when she described a classroom activity in which the students were to use their cell phones and GPS monitors to track down the location of potential bombs simulating the competition between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Throughout the activity the student’s were challenged with both known and unknown logistical and technological circumstances, which forced them to modify their searches. In discussing the debriefing with me she shared what she said to them:

This activity simulates the competition between the US and Soviet Union during the Cold War, hopefully you learned something about how to use the GPS while you were searching for nuclear bomb sites. The logistic problems made you think outside the box. This is what the US and the Soviet Union had to do back then to compete.

The use of this activity was a new experience for Taylor and the specific problems the students encountered were not anticipated, thus both the teacher and the students
experienced and applied problem solving/solution seeking skills. Taylor’s reflection on the activity addressed the value of the students being put into a position where they had to confront problems and figure out solutions completely on their own. She described their successes and frustrations as valuable learning experiences, which enabled them to become “part of the solution”. Ernie, while expounding upon the potential for the US and China to be the leaders in seeking doable solutions with regard to climate change, such as trading green energy and green technology went on to say:

…because they are so far ahead of us in terms of green technology, but understanding that even that is a possibility, that’d be part of education, that would be part of our system, that would be part of our educational and business models, that kind of stuff is going to get us where we need to be.

The ability to seek solutions, such as working with China rather than against them, and to examine never before considered possibilities due to political, cultural and economic traditions and constraints are viewed as essential to creating a livable and sustainable future in this increasingly complex and interconnected world. Though he described it on the global scale, he felt it was the role of education, the “grass roots education stuff” that would get current students and future leaders “there”. That is, equipping students with these skills is a requisite component of young people’s early and continuing education. Students’ having the ability and desire to seek solutions and solve problems is necessary on both a personal as well as a global scale and everywhere in between.

**Social-emotive habits**

The final subcategory of competencies or skills that emerged is characterized as social-emotive habits. These habits enable students to successfully interact and develop
relationships with other people as well as foster the ability to consider perspectives that differ from their own. These include their ability to have empathy, compassion for others, a sense of responsibility to others, integrity, trust, a sense of justice as well as the ability to recognize injustices. All of which contribute to ethical decision-making and the ability to recognize and effectively address challenging and complex situations and ideas.

In exploring what his educational goals for his students included, Ernie began discussing life skills:

So what do we mean by ‘teach them for life’? Teach them to be responsible, teach them to be compassionate right, teach them difference between right and wrong, teach them the difference between liberal and conservative, not make the answers for them but them choose their own answers. Like today when we were doing that tax activity …let’s talk about what the advantage is and the disadvantages….and so now what do you think is the most just thing? We’re not talking about taxes we’re talking about how do we want our society to look like?… asking, I wonder if our economy is just. I wonder if capitalism is truly the best way to organize this society?’

Ernie discussed how these social-emotive skills would enable students to examine not only their own interactions but also phenomenon, specifically ideologies such as capitalism and justice, existent in the larger society. The development of a deep sense of fairness and justice would enable them recognize the power dynamics, namely, who has it, who doesn’t and how did this come to be, both historically and currently. Elizabeth focused more on her student’s personal growth:

‘I want everybody to be a good person, I want them to be compassionate, have empathy…’ Asking her if all students can acquire empathy – ‘yes, I
think everybody can, but it’s going to, well, maybe they don’t care so much about what’s happening to these people over here, maybe they care more about something with science or technology…but they have that empathy there. They’re not a bleeding heart. You don’t have to be a bleeding heart, but you have to know.’

Here Elizabeth, recognizing the influence of labels and stereotypes as well as her student’s diverse areas of interest, emphasizes their capability of knowing what empathy is and experiencing it, even if only on a very personal level. She acknowledges that they may empathize with some and not others based upon these individual experiences and interests. However, this was a starting point for developing a deeper and broader ability to empathize and care about others. The Design a Sustainable World was a mastery project in which the students viewed peer created iMovie presentations addressing issues such as poverty, education for girls and the lack of clean water. Bert described some of the latent effects of this mastery project:

…you have kids crying in class… (realizing) ‘I didn’t know that.’ Their eyes get opened up. I mean, there’s no question, their eyes get opened up. And you know, I think they gain a lot more perspective on the world. Now…now, I think they’re probably a lot more careful about you know, their daily language. They don’t have to say ‘I’m starving, well no, they’ve seen starving. They don’t waste. I know, like even me personally, I’ve cut down on my water use, I’m much more conscious. Now, in terms of like a bottle of water, that means more to me now. So, I think they gain perspective, they gain insight, I think they gain a lot of maturity from this project.
His student’s exposure to the suffering of others provided them with new insights and perspectives, which they were able to apply to their everyday lives and relationships. This experience impacted Bert’s behaviors as well. The participants related how these new and broader perspectives all focus upon one’s relationship and/or connection to others and allowed the students the opportunity to discover more about the world, ask more questions about what is occurring and empower them to take action.

**How do we want them to BE?**

..teaching the kind of mindset of concepts of the processes, and I think a big part of that is the democratic education. I think that this is really important. (Ernie, Int.2)

This finding addresses the values, attitudes, perspectives, objectives, worldviews, and understandings the participants conceptualized as essential to the goals of social studies. This set of processes derived from and was driven by their fundamental beliefs regarding their purpose, the purpose of social studies in general and the purpose of their specific subject matter. It answers the questions: What perspectives/attitudes do I want my students to develop as a result of taking my social studies/science course and How do we want our students to view their relationship to the world they live in now and in the future? Though these questions were not asked directly, the categories, which emerged throughout the data analysis, created a collection of processes deemed by these teachers as mechanisms through which to approach living in the complex, interconnected world.

*Responsible Citizen Participators*
The teachers diverged somewhat in their use and definition of the concept of citizenship. Some perceived it as a right and all of them saw it as a responsibility. Likewise while all of them related it to local community obligations and duties, most connected to the national level and only one related the actual term citizenship on a global level. They all of them envisioned some sense of responsibility toward all levels of society; local, national and global. Taylor in her first narrative addressing the definition and the goals of social studies, was the only one who expressed citizenship as a social studies skill or expectation, by name, stating: “I think it’s more than just history. I think it’s more about incorporating (pause) being a good citizen, like what is required of being a good citizen?” She would add that social studies should teach students to “be a good, law abiding citizen, recognize their civic duties in their community, and be active in their community as a volunteer.” Later specifying:

...giving back, I think, is another big part of social studies, because we can be a very ‘me’ generation. ‘It’s all about me. How is this going to benefit me?’ You have to look outside of your self. .. You are just a small piece of this big puzzle so you have got to give back a little bit.

The main emphasis for Taylor revolved around students becoming participating members of their community through acts as straightforward as obeying the law, to looking beyond oneself and actively contributing for the greater good of ones community. The other participant’s used terminology such as rights, responsibilities, and on occasion the word “citizen”. In one instance, Marie, contested the use of the word citizen as outdated when she professed:
… we don’t want to sound like the comrade. But with your term citizen, I think it is viewed differently in this day and age then what it was viewed in the ‘60s, the ‘70s, and the ‘80s and I think its kind of gone through an evolution. I think we don’t just say citizen anymore.

Though in defining citizenship and later describing one of the goals of social studies she affirmed it to be: “…teaching good citizenship, teaching them to be responsible, reliable, good, productive members of our United States.” This sentiment would be reiterated during the second interview when Marie noted: “It’s funny because I really was thinking about citizenship the last time, because it was like, I think they look at it as, instead of talking about citizenship, they call it responsibility. What is your role as a citizen? As opposed to saying, ‘Citizenship’.” Her resistance to the term “citizenship” never became clear, though it did become analogous to the terms “responsibility” and later “participant.” Similarly as personal definition, Bert described it from a participation and service perspective when he stated:

Personally, it is somebody with duties and responsibilities and rights. I think as a citizen you have a lot of rights. I think you also have to stand up for those rights, you have to work for those rights. I’m all about serve as a citizen, not that everybody should serve in the military but everybody 18, should have some sort of mandatory service, Teach America, AmeriCorps.

When specifically asked the role his Government course played he responded:

And I would say that Government should prepare students to be citizens, to be active and engaged. So you would have to be active and engaged citizens, they have to… I know that’s my role…
The predominant objective for the participants with regard to citizenship, lies along a continuum of responsibility to their local community, state, country and in some instances the world.

**Loalizers - “Where we start”**

A common thread in all of the participants’ conceptualizations of social studies focused on the student’s ability to see and feel the connections and relevance between their lives and their local community. “I go local first” a statement made by Marie while discussing the nature of relevancy and connectedness. She added: “When I say local, I mean their home, their family, then their high school. The next step is how does their state compare to other states. How is their country affected by other countries?” Ernie and Bert also started in a local context with the use of the term “CIVITAS”, the Latin term for public entity or social body, or “that feeling of belonging to your community, that’s where we start.” In one of their lessons, they began by asking the students: “What do you want to do or change in your neighborhood?” In their Government course they examined both constitutional issues and the American system of government. However, they would facilitate their students close examination of both their local and state government levels. Ernie noted: “…we really look at the state and local level in a way that most schools districts do not.” Activities such as writing to local and state representatives, food drives, and lengthy debates discussing issues such as city tax increases were employed to “make real” what was happening in the world around them. Elizabeth, in teaching Global Studies, felt strongly that: “we need to be able to show, first hand, what’s going on, not just in some far, far away place in the world, but also right
here.” The process of becoming familiar with their local environment and the equally important recognition of the significance of this type of knowing and doing was found to be an essential component to their students’ educational outcome.

**Globalizers – Connecting to the global world**

The idea of living in a globalized world or more importantly the recognition that one lives in a globalized world and understanding the implications of this realization was found to be included in many of the teachers’ conceptualizations of social studies. From students examining their role in the global world to using it as a lens through which to see the world, the participants all shared the goal of enabling their students to look beyond their own immediate world and to connect, at some level, with the *global* world. This included recognizing both the universals and diversity that exist between and among people from all parts of the world. Marie stated: “I want them to be able to understand their role as a global citizen, if I can get them to go there.” She went on to share the story about one of her honor global studies students who was given the opportunity to speak to a group of incoming freshman.

The kids were asking them questions and stuff that I hadn’t even thought about, one was great, she goes ‘I always thought about how great America is and how wonderful America is, but now, I don’t. Its not that I don’t think that, but I think of myself, now as a part of, being a part of this planet and how I’m affecting different parts of the planet. I’m not just a US citizen, I’m part of this whole globe.’

The student reflected on her new view of the world as a real “eye-opener” and looked forward to applying what she learned to her future studies, likewise Marie felt validated
in her efforts to expand the worldview of her students. Through technology such as ePal, she envisions communicating with people from Qatar and examining something such as water rights. She added: “We may be responding to people who have to go to a well and how would you react, ladies and gentlemen, how would you respond to that?” Thus opening their minds to think differently and to learn directly through others what they are experiencing.

Though Elizabeth’s specific goal in her World Cultures course involved “looking at the world through global eyes”, she affirmed the importance of a global worldview in Global Studies by expressing her concern about students being prepared for the competitive global world. She focused less on creating competitors and more on helping to “fill the gap between the bridges” of her students’ world and the rest of the world with the goal of slowing down her students often quick judgments about other people and cultures. Using the World Cup, the international futbol (soccer) competition, as one of the mediums, she encouraged students to see commonalities among cultures along with the differences. By discussing topics such as its international popularity and national pride the students would recognize “wow, we are all tied together with this.”

Taylor’s perspective focused on making connections between global historical happenings and current events. As described previously, she felt strongly that citizenship education was an essential goal of her course. I asked her what she thought about the concept of global citizenship; was that something she had ever heard of, she responded: “No.” Recognizing that she had mentioned many of the elements involved in being a global citizen I attempted to link them together for clarification and asked: “So we talked about citizenship and how we are becoming more global and everything is more
connected. So, if you put those two concepts together as in global citizenship, does that sound like something that might be relevant?” She nodded, noting that she mostly focused on local connections in order to make the content relevant for her students, adding: “…but really I think the long term goal is to make them aware of everything that’s going on in the world and that it’s not just about them. That it’s great that they’re starting here locally. You know, Act Locally, Think Globally, or Think Globally, Act Locally.” She also noted the “me-ness” stage of freshman and encouraged them to begin looking outside of their own immediate world.

Marie, who taught both Honors Global Studies and regular Global Studies discussed throughout the interviews the differences between the students in the two different courses. In this instance, I had asked her if her students were interested in learning about the world from a global perspective. She responded:

I think the global studies kids, those that are in honors, they thirst for knowledge, and the thirst for, they understand the dynamics of what’s going on in the world, and they get it. The others, they’re very narrow-minded. This is what their parents have taught them, and they don’t see themselves traveling outside of the US… so they are limited in their scope and I think it’s because of their families.

She expresses her belief that the students who are not in the honors course, by the nature of their upbringing as well as their lower level of academic success are less capable and interested in grasping the concept of a global perspective. She was quick to say though, that there are some students, approximately 25% in these classes, who are acquiring a more global perspective as the year has progressed.
The objective of constructing one’s connections to the global world for these teachers began by identifying the importance of local connections. They then expanded outward toward a perspective, which allowed the students to actualize their connectedness to the global world and every place in between. Factors such as academic level and maturity appear to influence the teacher’s perception of their students’ capability of making and grasping the interconnectedness between themselves and the larger world in which they live.

**Actors not Reactors - Learning how to affect your system**

My findings suggest that the teacher’s had aspirations for their students to not only be participants but to actively create change in their world on the personal, local, national and global level. This was evident in a their conceptualizations of social studies as well as their practices. A common thread in all of the participants’ conceptualizations of social studies revolved around the significance of students understanding that they can have an effect on and influence the world in a variety of ways, beginning with their local community. One area of focus was on how individuals can interact with different groups to bring about change. The participants, in some instances exhibited a heightened display of energy and passion while discussing the hopes and expectations they had for their students. Ernie while responding to a question about the goal of social science education and education in general enthusiastically shared:

…it comes down to the individual teacher to try to …radicalize, heh, a group of children…(pause) and by radicalize I don’t mean left to right in any political sense. I mean wake kids up, like look, your future is in front of you and you have to seize it or you have to let it go and if you seize it
we’ll all be saved and if you let it go we are all going to …ah fade, we are going to fade away.

Ernie expresses the sense of foreboding he has for both his students and humanity in general regarding the crucial nature of “seizing” and acting upon the issues and concerns facing the world and his students. Recognizing his role in helping students to identify their role he stated: “Part of my job as a government teacher is it gives students the ability to feel that efficacy and they are agents they are not just reactors.” This is accomplished through both Ernie and Bert’s meticulously designed courses and authentic projects, which are designed to facilitate their students through the process of inquiry, discovery, connection and empowerment.

Taylor’s perspective is quite similar by her recognition that part of her role as a SS educator is: “Giving them the opportunity and encouraging them to take that step to make a difference.” Going out into the world around them, discovering what is occurring and identifying their own role in the world would allow them to “be part of the solution, not the problem.” Taylor expressed great concern over many of her students’ lack of initiative and sense of helplessness with regard to what they were capable of learning and doing. She noted on several occasions how the current system, at least the one her students had experienced, left them with a feeling of a lack of motivation and empowerment to “go out on their own” and investigate the subjects discussed in class as well as the issues and problems facing their world. They demonstrated concern and curiosity, yet sometimes lacked the drive, either expecting someone else would do it for them or claiming they do not know “how” to inquire deeper and therefore create change.
She felt creating opportunities such as a “citizenship” component to her course would enable them to “go out and experience things” that they might not do on their own. Though recognizing that this may be why they had become used to others creating experiences and therefore unable to create or seek out their own.

Looking at it from a historical perspective Elizabeth explained how she connected motivating her students into action with what she perceived as the American tradition by stating: “It’s not going to get us anywhere, wallowing never got our country… we didn’t start with wallowing. WE started with saying ‘peace out’ we’re going to the Americas. We started over.” Elizabeth, similar to Taylor, expressed both frustration in the lack of initiative on the part of her students and also a passion in promoting and encouraging students to recognize the power to influence and change what they felt was not “right” or “just” about the world they lived in, whether it was in their community or the world.

Elizabeth emphatically stated: “No, I don’t want them to agree with that… I never let them just say ‘well, this is how it is’. No, its not, well, if the French can overthrow a monarchy, you can change anything here. Come on now, we can do it, you’ve got to be able to do it.” Elizabeth also noted the school culture, which encouraged teachers to create healthy, supportive relationships with their students and felt that this promoted a current senior class of “do-gooders” (not noted as sarcasm), who, mostly on their own have created a variety of clubs and organizations within the school focused upon helping others in their school, their community and beyond. Lowering her voice, she didn’t mince words when she discussed one of her main objectives was to educate students so they can become the voices of change, stating her call to arms was: “I’m educating…go change, go change the US, kids!”
Justice Seers and Seekers

My findings suggest that two processes regarding the concept of *justice* emerged as valuable for their students to experience and apply. Justice, specifically social justice, encompasses the belief that the dignity of every human being be recognized with the: “goal for full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (Bell, 2007, p 1). The first process involved questioning the justice of an idea, policy or an action taken. The second employed distinguishing that what might appear as “just” to one person/group could be felt as very “unjust” by another. Both were applied to historical and current contexts. Ernie described this as one of the intrinsic values of education, encouraging students to ask questions such as: “What is just? What do we want our society to look like? and “I wonder what economic system is most just?”

Elizabeth wanted her students to examine the injustices that went on and go on in the world today. By discussing how injustices can and do occur in both “unstable” nations, for example in times of war, as well as in seemingly “stable” nations when a blind eye is turned toward injustices, either through denial or outright violations of those in a society who do not have a voice. Both Elizabeth and Marie discussed the use of the book, *Sold*, by Patricia McCormick, which examines human trafficking in India, in addition to current event articles, that discussed its occurrence in the US as well.

This understanding was not always implicitly stated as a goal. Taylor while discussing various factors that could be examined while analyzing and identifying the impacts of the use of Agent Orange during Vietnam stated:

The other aspect, the social aspect, just for informational, you know, within the environmental impact would also make them look at or ask
questions about: So, What group of people had to live in this condition? You know, what particular group of people would be most affected? You know, and historically there is a pattern. It’s not the upper class! … Yeah, its not the factory owners, its not the educators, its not the wealthy, the aristocrats…that kind of thing. They stayed out and watched from the outside, so, that’s another social and that social aspect, that way of life we still see happening today. Where do the factories go in the cities? You know, where do the dumps go? You know, that sort of thing. What part of our cities are left to decay?...

Taylor’s eagerness to encourage her students to ask these kinds of questions was illustrated by the tone of her voice and the connections she made between then and now.

Elizabeth while discussing historical instances of unjust groups and rulers noted:

Right, so it’s not OK for groups to have ruled all of these places for so long. Why not? Because that is against human rights. You see violations of that; you see injustices up until the 1990s with Mandela, so these things that, even if they don’t understand all of the history or they don’t memorize all of the facts, they can at least see these are past injustices, how can we make sure these don’t happen again in the future. Just so they’re aware. Half of the reason things happen in this world is because people live in their little hole and they’re not aware.

This finding indicates most of the teachers have an understanding of justice through highlighting and questioning historical and current injustices. They also strongly believe that it has a place in social studies education and it is there responsibility to facilitate their student’s awareness. What did not emerge in their conceptualizations were specific strategies for addressing such injustices in today’s world, specifically in their students’ lives. The guiding of students toward seeking what is just and what is unjust
both from an historical and current perspective emerged in their actual classroom practices as well, which will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

**Teacher’s Social Studies Practices**

The first section of this chapter addresses how teachers conceptualize social studies and the findings indicate teachers focused mostly upon two themes: what they wanted their students to “be able to do” and how they wanted them to “be in the world.” In some instances the findings in these two themes overlapped; therefore a clear distinction between the two did not occur. The purpose of this section of Chapter Four is to examine the findings guided by the overall inquiry into the relationship between social studies and educating for sustainability and the following specific research question:  

2. *How do teachers practice or enact social studies in their classrooms?*

Through multiple classroom observations over several months and the analysis of a variety of classroom documents, the following findings were found to revolve around the three characteristics:

1. Designing a social studies classroom/course.
2. Modeling and weaving expectations and behaviors in a social studies classroom. Teachers emulating their expectations (do as I do) and implementing practices/methods within the classroom, which reinforce their conceptualizations of social studies.
3. Bringing it all together – Thinking, linking and doing. Applying the essential habits, worldviews, designs, and modeling.

This study’s foundational purpose sought to examine the relationship between social studies and educating for sustainability by inquiring into the social studies
teachers’ conceptualization of the goals of social studies and their enacted teaching practices. Similar to the overlap found in the findings in Section One, the findings in this section were found to overlap and connect with each other as well as with those from Section One. Thus, the narratives discussing the teachers’ practices contain theoretical reflections and excerpts from their interviews, their classroom practices and a variety of documents. I found that this overlap and connectedness among and between all of the findings demonstrate the dynamic complexity of the data analysis process.

**Designing the social studies classroom**

These findings suggest, to varying degrees, that participants in this study used a strategic approach to create an intentional classroom environment, referred to by two of the participants as “design”. The theme of “designing a purposeful classroom” emerged in the first interview and was notably present throughout the classroom observations. The teachers purposefully planned, integrated and enacted the following in their social studies classrooms: end in mind or backward planning, student feedback, organizational/structural, differentiation and relationship strategies. These components created a classroom in which their students could work toward achieving the social studies education goals and objectives established both by their own conceptualizations and those set by the school community. The practices discussed in this finding, though addressing some of their design strategies, are not mutually exclusive of what occurred on a daily basis in the their classrooms. It was evident from their daily practices that most of what they enacted was thoughtful/reflective and purposeful, either supporting the final assessment objectives and/or the conceptualized social studies/course expectations.
discussed in Section One of this chapter. The significance of designing and enacting a purposeful classroom lies in the ability to not only visualize what the teachers want to achieve in their social studies courses, but to create and take the necessary steps to do so. These steps do not appear to be linear, yet do contribute to the overall process and visualized purpose of the particular social studies course being taught. Thus, the importance of having a goal is as equally significant as the process involved in achieving it.

**End in mind or backward planning**

One of the most noted elements, which emerged as part of the social studies classroom design process was the concept of designing or planning with the *end in mind* also referred to as *backward planning*. For all of the teachers, designing their unit lessons with a clear picture of what they wanted their students to learn and achieve was imperative to daily and long-term practices. In the redesign of all three of their courses; US History, World History and Government – Citizenship and the American System, Ernie described what both he and Bert were trying to accomplish:

…Well we also want our students to be able to think about questions and be able to think about the big picture. So we began to conceptualize okay, ‘so what is mastery?’ Mastery is that you can do things, and you get things, like you *get it*. If one of those pieces doesn’t fall into place, you’re not at mastery. That began to sort of reshape how I wanted to teach my classes. It’s kind of like the difference between having a bunch of bricks and you know a plan to build a house, you know an architecture-like plan. And so we began to reformulate how we did things and then that led to foundations. So our foundations helped to teach us the skills and teach us the big understanding and make sure that we understand the basic
elements of content before we attempt the mastery project. (Appendix G sample CIVITAS unit plan)

Bert and Ernie’s backward planning began with their conceptualization of mastery for each of their curriculum units, which would be demonstrated by the students not only knowing the unit material but also their ability to “do it” or apply it in the form of an authentic assessment such as project, presentation or application. They then would purposefully map out the process through which the students would acquire the content, skills and understandings. Lastly, they would assess where their students were starting from with a series of foundation lessons beginning with the essential skills required to guide their students through the unit towards the mastery assessment project. The abridged CIVITAS Unit 1 Overview and Mastery Instructions (Appendix G), illustrate what Ernie alluded to in the above quote. On a daily basis students would be reminded to access and review the unit goals in order to be reminded of what the end goal was for the particular unit. During one of the classroom observations Ernie reminded the students:

For the dramatic inquiry, tomorrow, come in ready to participate and use the knowledge from all of the text and lessons we have had. You must use all of the information we have used and assigned. You will also use this to synthesize the information so you can use it on your final essays.

Here, as he refers back to previous lessons, he re-emphasizes their purposeful intent to prepare them for that day’s dramatic inquiry exercise as well as their final assessment essay. As exhibited in the Unit 1 Overview, the State Academic Content Standards were an integral part of the “end in mind” planning process. All of the teachers were mindful
and driven by the state standards, though there were varying degrees of reference. While discussing the basis for daily content decisions Taylor noted:

I would say the standards that we have and sometimes the interests the kids have. Obviously I bring in their interests but, really I guess, what guides me are: ‘What do they need to know at the end of the day?’ I think we are, I hate to say, limited by the standards because this is just where we need to be at the end. We can get there any way we want.

The content standards were clearly influential in the daily decision-making by providing an endpoint, while allowing space for teachers to consider the students interests in the decision making process for determining which methods to be used. This design strategy paints a picture or creates a holistic view for the students and the teachers, enabling them to visualize both figuratively and literally the pathway toward their goal. It also demonstrates for the students that the value in knowing how to get there rests largely on where it is they want to go. Taylor recognizes the influence and importance of the standards as the end goal, yet also acknowledges the opportunity to plan and decide the pathway through which they will proceed toward meeting the goals. Though there may be some trepidation in this recognition, which can be seen by the last two sentences of her statement where she simultaneously states the standards as limiting as well as open to options regarding the methods for achieving them. In her daily practices, Taylor posted an agenda on the board, which informed the students as to what they had just covered, what they were going to cover and what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson, week or unit. She made use of the lesson objectives by having the students review them for before and after the units as well as for their exams. During one of the last days
of class she reminded her students: “What I think is really beneficial is to answer those objectives, to get the big picture I would study the objectives.” The aspiration of *getting the big picture* through intentional curriculum design with the *end in mind* was also a significant element for Elizabeth’s classroom planning. In discussing daily content choices Elizabeth stated:

Well, content would be...when you break it down, we have the end in mind, that’s how I typically work. What’s the goal of the entire unit and then, how do I build lessons to get to that goal. So that way the kids can look back and see the big pieces and maybe the vocab or the timeline, the cause and effect, those are small pieces, but they can see how everything goes back to the conflict beginning with World War Two. So where did it all come from? We break that down and talk about it in class, use primary sources, class activities and all that kind of stuff, so...end in mind.

Similar to Taylor, Elizabeth also utilized a daily agenda mapping out what they had done and what they were to do throughout the week. Elizabeth also used verbal reminders and teasers of what was to come and how past and current activities would facilitate their success on a future assessment or activity. For example, while giving the instructions and identifying the criteria for a “country project” in which the students were to identify and discuss the major issues a particular country was experiencing, both domestically and internationally, she asked the students: “What theme did we start the year off with?... yes, globalization. When you present these you will then see all of the connections.” The design of her Global Studies curriculum began with an in-depth analysis of globalization in its current form, she then moved thematically and chronologically across geographic regions ending with their examination of current issues occurring in countries throughout
the world. Likewise, Marie, in her Global Studies course syllabus, stated through a similar “historical and geographical context” that “the long term objective is for students to demonstrate an understanding of how the big picture of world history assists in understanding the complexities of today’s global arena.” Her end-of-the-year project reinforced this objective by requiring students to use three of the themes they had studied throughout the year such as New Ideas: Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution, Imperialism: Exploration and Expansion and World Conflict and apply them to a current world issue topic such as Human Rights. The students were to make thematic connections by demonstrating an understanding of how the past is linked to the present. The responses were mixed when I asked if they had shared the specific projects and assessments with the students at the beginning of the year/trimester, thus communicating the final destination or end point. In some instances, a printed and/or online document (syllabus) was provided at the beginning of each course. In most cases, the teachers verbalized the expectations concerning the end of the year projects in the beginning and throughout the year. Often they did not provide detailed explanations for fear of overwhelming the students with information. Bert and Ernie’s trimester school year, which consisted of teaching three courses in one year versus one course in a year, may have enabled them to provide the course and project details without overloading the students with information. The prescriptive nature of end in mind goals, such as those driven by the content standards was tempered by the sense of flexibility in selecting and designing the pathway that would get them there. The levels of design demonstrated variation from simple to complex.
**Seeking, reflecting upon and applying feedback**

My findings suggest that another purposeful design approach used by all of the social studies/science teachers in this study involved the embracing of various methods of feedback. This feedback came from their students, their peers and their own reflective dispositions. Both the interviews and classroom observations yielded data to generate the significance of feedback as a valued and practiced construct. Feedback served as a design strategy in that it was used in a purposeful manner to guide the teacher’s short-term (daily) and long-term (units/course) instructional decisions. Feedback was requested and received through both formal (explicit) and informal (spontaneous) means. For example, Bert and Ernie used a formal trimester evaluation to inform their teaching and as a result: “changed significant elements of the class based on student input.” This highly valued feedback from their students enabled them to review and edit their courses so as to better serve their students or “clients”. It also enabled them to identify areas in which they could differentiate their lessons in order to reach the most students. The solicitation of immediate feedback took shape in the form of tools such as Plus/Delta, a “t” shaped chart with a “+” on the left hand side and a “triangle/delta” on the right hand side (Table 4.2), where the students are asked to provide feedback. This strategy was used to review daily lessons and/or specific activities within the lesson in order to identify both the positive and negative aspects of the process. It was evident that this was a commonly used tool based upon the expedient manner in which the students completed the task.
Table 4.2 Plus/Delta

Marie’s end-of-the-year project also served as a formal, long-term method of feedback. As her Honors Global History students shared their projects with their classmates, Marie noted the areas/topics that were covered by her student teacher and those she covered, noting the possible depth of coverage of some such as WWII and OPEC and the underrepresentation of others such as the economic, social and global underpinnings of the US dollar. Using her own reflective feedback on the project, specifically with her Global History classes, Marie noted that this was the first year a large number of students did not complete the project and some had not even attempted it. She lamented: “…I must not have been a good teacher through the course of the year if they don’t have knowledge of the topics.” Her frustration quickly turned to problem solving as she reflected back on the project, its instructions, format, etc. She noted how she “sat down with every single kid and walked them through to make sure that they were on track.” Her efforts to seek feedback through meeting one-on-one with students
demonstrated her desire to: “figure out how I can at least get them started to do something as opposed to them just like going, ‘I just don’t know what to do, so I am not going to do anything.’” In designing the current course, Marie noted from the mid-year project, her Global History students had struggled with writing their thesis statement and citations. As a result of this assessment she declared: “and so when I designed this project I went to an English teacher and asked: ‘What can I expect?’” Through our discussion of this year’s concerns about the project Marie stated:

So when I present this (should) I say ‘this is what you do in English class. This overlaps, so what they teach in English use here.’ So I am saying it, maybe I need to write it actually out on the handout, ‘this overlaps with what you’ve learned in English.’ So in critiquing myself, maybe I should make sure that that’s clear.

From this self-reflection she deduced that emphasizing and applying what they had already learned in a previous class was a potential strategy for improving her students’ ability to successfully structure their thesis statements and citations. She also considered that including the information in the written directions might provide even more clarification for the students. In this instance, Marie applied the disappointing results of the formative assessment, her own personal reflections and the feedback she received from meeting individually with students to re-design her methods and procedures for her next year of classes.

Also worth noting here is Marie’s interest in “overlapping” and making an interdisciplinary connection to the English curriculum. Even more importantly, sharing this connection with her students so that they would be able to see and understand how
the skills they acquire can and should be utilized beyond the artificial confines of a particular discipline. Marie also employed the use of reflection tools for herself and her students, which enabled both to reflect upon a particular activity. For example, upon the completion of a classroom debate the students were asked to state their position and then discuss how they believed the class “got it”. This was accomplished by detailing how their classmates responded to their position and the questions they asked of them. As a design tool, reflections from the students provided valuable insights for Marie to consider with regard to the success and achievement of the lesson/activities objectives.

Elizabeth also sought student reflective feedback through the use of journaling. In one particular classroom observation, after reading an article titled, *Tweeting Their Way to Freedom*, she asked the students to record in their journals responses to three questions:

1. How would you communicate during an emergency? Explain why.
2. How do social networking services like Twitter/Facebook pose a threat in non-democratic societies? Think: Who and what do they threaten and why?
3. Pick either the Cultural Revolution or Tiananmen Square Massacre and write a series of 5-10 “tweets”/or “status updates” for what you are experiencing (what would be your reaction to these events).

As they responded to these questions, Elizabeth moved around the room reading many of the students’ responses. This exercise enabled all students to deliberate and respond to the questions and provided immediate feedback to the instructor with regard to the student’s interpretation and understanding of the historical events, thus enabling her to make a decision regarding how to proceed with the rest of the lesson. Elizabeth also elicited less
formal forms of feedback, which were threaded throughout nearly every aspect of her classroom interactions with her students. She routinely checked in with her students by asking: “Are you with me?” or “By a show of hands, how many still aren’t sure about--?” In many instances she would quietly and separately ask a number of students if they understood, thus guiding her to determine if she felt comfortable with moving on with the lesson or activity. She shared an account of this during a post observation interview stating:

Last week, ha ha, for the first time in a long time, we’ll always say, we’ll go back formally and reteach. Well, they didn’t get it and I was like ‘forget it, we’re not moving on, this is ridiculous, there is no way, this is important material’ and we went back and relearned it and everybody did great on our check-in.

Feedback given to her from her World Cultures students prompted a restructuring of the course. They felt they were only “skimming the surface” of the potential number of countries and culture to learn about. To address this, Elizabeth restructured the course in order to examine a particular topic “through all of the places in the world”, instead of just focusing on one place/country at a time and not exposing the students to a broader view of the world. A concern here might be the loss of quality in favor of quantity, yet her ultimate objective as she stated was “hopefully, that will get us a little bit deeper.” This restructuring illustrated the belief that making connections across space and time would enable students to come away with a richer understanding of a variety of issues and topics as they are occurring throughout the world, rather than as isolated instances.
Feedback as a design tool can provide both immediate and long-term opportunities to involve stakeholders in the process of the classroom design. Essential to this process is further reflection and thoughtful application of the modifications. Important to note: the openness to seek feedback was not always representative of the willingness to apply it. For example, an instance was observed in which the teacher verbally cut off a student who had disagreed or questioned something the teacher had said. In another, the teacher had asked for a “show of hands” to demonstrate understanding, even though most of the students did not raise their hands, the teacher moved on in the lesson. These type of incidents result in mixed messages being sent and the potential for a lack of trust between the students and the teacher. Democratic principles such as dissent, participation and decision-making could also be seen as valuable connectors to feedback as a classroom design tool.

**Balancing organization/structure and flexibility**

A theme that emerged to varying degrees was the existence and valuing of a sense of organization and structure both in classroom practices and in curricular structure. All of the participants used both verbal and written cues to assist students in their daily activities/lessons as well as those to come. Examples include written agendas on the board identified both daily and/or weekly schedules as well as periodic verbal references to what should the students should be working on and what will be occurring next.
For example on the board in Ernie’s classroom the following was provided:

1. Solution – (is it) specific
2. Problem/Solution => MDG
3. My Concern
4. Your concern/Questions

This agenda outlined how the individual conferences he was conducting would be structured, therefore giving the students a clear sense of what they were to expect and subsequently be prepared to address. Though, as Ernie would say, “life is not predictable”; therefore, insertions of unplanned or unexpected topics, instructions or schedule changes would also occur, which demonstrated flexibility on the part of the teachers as well as habituating of students to one of the certainties in the “real world”. In Elizabeth’s classes, both Global History and World Cultures, the instructional pace was often rapid and energetic, and it appeared most of the students were able to keep up and successfully transition from question to question, topic to topic and exercise to exercise. This expeditious approach was a result of her desire to keep the student’s attention, her passion for teaching and demeanor as well as a sense of urgency regarding both time and content concerns. It was apparent from multiple classroom observations over the course of two academic years that most of her students became accustomed to her methods as a result of a consistent classroom structure (such as the establishment of a routine), her consistent “check-ins” as well as her willingness and ease in asking questions to clarify confusion. Though there is still concern about whether all students are truly attended to in this fast-paced yet structured environment. Do the ones who are confused or behind express himself or herself or feel comfortable doing so?
Marie and Taylor also created a structured and organized daily classroom environment through the verbalization and visualization of agendas and consistency in their daily and lesson procedures. They simultaneously accepted and successfully created spaces for expected and unexpected changes due to a variety of factors including current local, national and world events, school community happenings as well as the “teachable moments” which so often occur as a result of an openness to students’ perspectives and interest in seeking connectedness and relevancy. For example, Marie received word one afternoon that a Blackhawk helicopter would be arriving on campus through the efforts of another teacher at the school. Though taking her classes out to see it was clearly not in her plan for the day, she recognized “the teachable moment” and demonstrated her flexibility by taking her students out to see it. While viewing the Blackhawk, Marie, through interacting with small groups of students while they were viewing various parts of the machine, was able to refer back to previous lessons and discuss with the students some of the historical and current impacts of war. Though I was unable to hear many of the specifics, some concepts such as cost, power, technology, civilian support, battles, etc. were overheard and the students were clearly engaged.

The interplay between structure and flexibility was aptly demonstrated between Ernie and Bert’s curriculum unit creation and classroom processes. While observing Ernie review a series of lessons with students who had yet to achieve mastery, Ernie referred several times to their “evidence map”. In another small group nearby Bert referred to the same tool by asking his students: “What do we do in class that we review in each unit that helps us understand the ‘story’?” , then leaning towards me he whispered:
“It’s all about schemas and organizing information.” In a follow-up interview Bert clarified the origin and purpose of the “evidence map” by stating:

An evidence map is a processing document for the students that might string together different activities. Let’s say you’re going to be teaching in block scheduling and there are like 5 or 6 different activities. You waste a lot of time, effort and paper if there is a different processing sheet for each. …so now instead of like five different documents we’d have one called the Evidence Map for that lesson and five different parts, and that is what you saw today. Now that seems like a small thing but that saves time and in the end that could save 10 to 15 minutes.

This organizational instrument served the functions of saving time and merging documents, which enabled students to see what was coming next as well as improving the accessibility to what was going to happen next. This “predictability” was also purposeful in its design. Ernie shared this regarding its intention: “We made each topic of study…we formatted it to a template and we made sure that each topic of study had the same template and had the same types of objectives; they’re predictable.” Bert would go on to explain from his own personal experiences: “I know that people want context and an expectation of what is likely to happen. …When we do these evidence maps, part of the beauty of it is that you have already used this a couple of months ago so the students recognize it and begin to process the new information”, rather than focusing on processing a whole new schema. Their method of focusing on providing students with predictable, organized and efficient materials also serves to promote their goal of students experiencing success through the mastering of the topic, especially for struggling students. As Ernie noted: “So we have to invent new ways to teach and one of those is we
tell them exactly what’s going to happen, we tell them exactly when its going to happen, if we have an end in mind we’re going to start scaffolding them to that.” By reducing disruptive transitions and the cognitive inertia of the “unknown”, they succeed in controlling the aspects of the classroom practices most likely to promote the success of all of their students, while at the same time modeling their importance and ability to remain flexible to unknowns that are part of everyday reality both inside and outside the classroom. This, “scaffolding”, described by Ernie, also illustrates the teacher as connector role discussed earlier in the chapter.

Differentiating lessons

This finding suggests that promoting success for all students through feedback, organization, structure and flexibility also demonstrated the teachers’ effort to model differentiated instruction. All of the teachers used a variety of instructional strategies to connect with the various learning styles of their students. Bert stated it clearly when he said:

…I mean, you see we have the projectors so that’s why I’m a big advocate of whatever I am saying, that it is also (written) on the board. I want them to be able to see it and I want them to be able to hear it. We’re trying to incorporate more movement, which is dramatic inquiry, in order to maximize all learning styles. So I am trying to hit Gardner’s multiple intelligences. I want to satisfy the mathematic people. I want to satisfy the language people. I want to satisfy the interpersonal, the intrapersonal. …you know everybody’s got different skills so I’m trying to give everybody a chance to shine.
Recognizing their students as a diverse group of individuals with varied interests and learning styles led to the use of a variety of instructional strategies including audio chapter review readings, audio primary source interviews, art and music from historical time eras and diverse cultures, student’s choice in selecting discussion topics, graphic organizers for note taking and charting of evidence, role playing of government officials, the creation of groups based upon knowledge, interests and/or learning styles; community speakers, project planning, journaling, opportunities to work with groups and/or as an individual, and experiential projects such as using global positioning system (GPS) coordinates to locate and gather information from around the school campus and interviewing community members outside of the school setting. As Marie noted: “you’re working with everybody and its nice” and that this was one of the many rewarding aspects of teaching because it meant working with students who have many needs and those that are at a higher level.

The use of differentiated instructional strategies also resulted in students being able to demonstrate what they have learned through a variation of alternative assessments. In some instances, students were encouraged to choose their methods of assessment, such as the production of an iMovie, the writing of a report, the creation of a scrapbook, the presentation of a report, the creation of a board game or music cd, to demonstrate their understanding of the material. The findings in this category clearly indicate the teachers’ understanding and practice of various differentiated instructional strategies. In most instances great effort was made to ensure students “got it”, with the reflection on and re-teaching of lessons occurring frequently enough to be noted.
The designing of an intentional classroom using backward planning, feedback, organization/structure, flexibility and differentiated instruction all indicate these social studies teachers are inclined to perceive their classrooms and students in a holistic manner, therefore, increasing the likelihood of mediating their ability to make connections to the content, the process and each other.

**Modeling – Do as I say and as I/we do…**

This finding indicates that teachers reinforced their objectives through multiple traditional pathways such as detailed instructions, objectives, daily agendas, etc. What also appeared, as a consistent and relevant method in these teacher’s classrooms, was the act of modeling. Modeling the behaviors, expectations, skills and ways of being were central classroom practices with all of the participants. Similar to the design practices, the teachers actively demonstrated many of the sought after *ways of thinking* and *ways of being* described in Chapter Four. This finding will be explored through the various approaches, which in many instances are also desired competencies, hence the use of modeling as the mechanism through which they were observed and conveyed.

**Questioning**

The participants modeled a variety of questioning strategies ranging from lower cognitive, such as recall, direct and closed, to higher cognitive, such as open-ended, interpretive, inquiry and synthesis. Recall questions, such as: “Which President ordered the dropping of the atomic bomb?” were scattered throughout lessons, though mainly used in quickly paced review sessions. The establishment of questioning as a modeling sub-category was a result of the tendency of these teachers to actively stimulate higher
levels of thinking and questioning in their students. For instance, the participants in their interviews expressed the importance of their students acquiring the ability, through inquiry, to question the knowledge and assumptions they experienced both in the classroom and the world around them. The method of questioning employed by all of the teachers reinforced the significance of this as an essential habit for both themselves and their students. In Bert’s classroom the use of provocative and sometimes unsettling lines of questioning were used to catch the student’s attention, to elicit a passionate response and to encourage students to deliberate the authenticity of the question itself. The following examples from classroom observations of Bert are not provided with their full context, though I believe their distinctness can still be appreciated.

Lesson on imperialism:
“Do you know, and I’m speaking as a Catholic, that religion has been used as a controller of people?”
This was used to set up his next question:
“Which countries used imperialism to control other countries?”

A lesson on the roles of political parties:
“Doesn’t two political parties make sense?”,
Then later… “Are they advocating the overthrow of the government?”
“So why would freedom loving Americans give more power to the federal government?”

Lesson about the New Deal:
“Why should politicians care about what women think?”
This was used when questioning a student about a topic choice to encourage her to be able to provide justification for its choice.
The use of these types of questions served to elicit responses as well as address controversial issues as they appeared throughout the lessons. The students’ responses were often challenging yet respectful and inquisitive, though the non-responses and perceptions would provide valuable insight as well and should be considered in assessing this technique. It appeared a well-established relationship had been sought and achieved with Bert’s classes at this point in the year, perhaps enabling this as an effective strategy.

Another strategy involved the customary information gathering maxim of asking who, what, where, why, when, and how all of which were employed on a regular basis by all of the participants. However, the inclusion of “so what?” as a critical thinking tool was also frequently practiced. Bert noted this could be used as a deeper inquiry into any subject by asking, “So what, why should I/we care? So what does this mean? Alright I have these details, so what?” The modeling of this line of questioning was often used to push the students to dig further into historical as well as personal explanations into topics ranging from human trafficking to taxation to learning about the cultures of other countries to the justification for the use of the atomic bomb. Rather than students lamenting about why they should learn this or that or asking: “What does this have to do with me?” in these social studies classes, the teachers would pose these questions to them, necessitating the students to deliberate and construct their own interpretations and understandings. A strategy employed to motivate creative thinking involved posing “what if?” questions and scenarios to the students. Ernie, during a lesson on taxes asked: “What if they abolish the income tax completely?” Elizabeth, while setting up a lesson about the Cold War asked: “What if you could be a superhero, who would you be and what if you
could have 3 superpowers, what would you want and how would you use them?” The use of this type of open-ended questions allowed students to explore possibilities and create alternatives solutions as well as examine issues and events from a different and perhaps futuristic perspective.

Another questioning strategy employed and modeled by the participants was the use of clarifying questions. Clarifying questions could be used to break down and analyze information as well as to dig deeper into the meaning of a particular topic. Ernie described the process he used when he invited a speaker from Growing America to his classroom: “…and she came and spoke about it, so I was modeling and asking you know, the clarifying questions, the probing questions.” These types of questions were often used and encouraged in one-on-one or small group teacher/student meetings for engaging guest speakers and student presentations of work. There were several potential goals that warranted the use of this type of questioning. These included an effort to guide students to a particular point (narrowing of focus), to explore and assess the depth of knowledge, and lastly to collect more details and verify information. Elizabeth modeled the questioning process during a Global Studies lesson. First she had them read articles in small groups and assess challenges occurring in various African countries. She then sat down with each group and briefly probed their comprehension of the material. Below is a sample of her questions and comments without the student’s responses.

**Group One:**

Okay, so what happened? (knowledge)

Alright, what else? This is a really good example of the effects of colonialism. Remember when the Belgians came in and separated the tribal groups? (illustration)
Why is this important for us to know? (relevancy, critical/creative lens)
Good, excellent, this is an example of refugees.

Group Two:
Ready?
What do we know? (knowledge)
What is sub-Saharan Africa? (knowledge)
How does this affect my (your) life, society? (relevancy, creative/critical)
Good.
Bad economy, there are still stigmas.
Think about it, your generation would be gone. (reflective, relevancy)
Make sure you talk about the story too.

Also weaved within the clarifying questions are specific illustrations as well as questions and statements about personal relevancy. This process was conducted at an accelerated and energetic pace, which served to keep all of the students engaged and once she had moved on to another group allowed them just enough time to continue the discussion, but not too much time, which may have led to the groups drifting off topic.

Ernie in a similar fashion sat down with each student to discuss the topics for their Government mastery project, the White Paper. Below is an excerpt from one of his interactions.

Student One:
I like this, tell me more. (deeper knowledge)
When you are talking about income, with more women in public affairs we are going to see.. (illustrations)
A bill with two goals, is slated to fail, you dilute yourself.
Do you want to do pay gap or do you want to do public affairs?
(narrowing focus)
You can either create structural change in this country to give women more educational opportunities or you push for equality with no pay gaps whatsoever. (illustrations)

My concern, I want you to look at the ERA that failed. It would have guaranteed equal pay.

Maybe it is time for a new ERA? (reflective, creative)

What concerns do you have right now? (reflective, feedback)

Good, good, I’m encouraged.

In this excerpt, Ernie also used specific illustrations as well as questions, statements and suggestions, with the latter directed toward the narrowing of the student’s paper topic.

Marie and Bert also used this clarifying process, while preparing their students for the completion of their Global History final project and DSW mastery project, respectively.

Asking questions to elicit reflective, critical and creative thinking occurred throughout daily lessons and interactions, though responses were not always sought.

Many of these questioning strategies were implemented through controversial and critical topics. While reviewing the previous day’s World Culture class and prepping for an upcoming project Elizabeth mentioned an article about water, how it is used here (US) and around the world, and how much is wasted. She also reminded them of a video that discussed the role lumber companies were playing in changing cultures throughout the world. After this review she asked the class: “What is the cost of human progress?” She went on to discuss more of the water issues occurring throughout the world. This was a higher cognitive level and relevant inquiry left unaddressed; its examination could be an entire lesson in and of itself. In another instance, while discussing the Industrial
Revolution, the banking crisis and unfair labor practices she asks a number of value-laden and important questions including:

- What are the costs of our decisions?
- Why can’t we be more responsible about how we behave?
- Why can’t we demand changes be made? My voice is being heard. We can make small changes. I want you to think and ask questions.

I inquired about the asking of these questions and the lack of responses to which she replied she that knew she was moving through these topics very quickly, and felt rushed and while wanting to get through it and be able to discuss it with the students, she felt tremendous pressure to keep the lesson moving in order to cover the necessary material. This speaks volumes about the barriers raised by standardization and testing and the lost opportunities to facilitate students’ critical lens, deliberation skills and decision-making habits. The last statement was her modest attempt to encourage and support her students to act upon her appeal by asking the kind of questions she has modeled for them.

It is important to consider if a barrage of questions that are unanswerable either due to time or intent instill the desire to seek out the answers. Could this process also inhibit deeper levels of thinking or the create ambiguity due to being overwhelmed?

**Multiple Perspectives, Collaboration and Framing**

As earlier findings suggested, the ability and desire to recognize the existence of and to seek multiple perspectives was found to be an important aspect of social studies education by all of the participants; likewise was the ability to seek out and consider different points of view before making a judgment or decision. In turn, these skills facilitate successful collaboration experiences, both of which were modeled in varying
degrees in all of the participants’ classrooms. This finding indicates that modeling these creative and functional skills provided the opportunity for teachers to invite diverse perspectives both from within and outside of their classrooms, thus reinforcing the valuable role cultural diversity plays in our democratic society. This sub-category will explore both of these competencies as they are practiced through daily classroom interactions and lesson-driven activities.

The discussion following a reading of White Man’s Burden by Rudyard Kipling and the reasoning behind encouraging the US to “jump in to the whole game of imperialism”, Bert replied to a student’s comment about the “arrogance of that kind of thinking” by stating:

Yeah, not just arrogant, it is dripping with racism, that is the mindset – this is how they rationalized that it was ‘okay to do this.’

Human beings only do what is rationale and makes sense to them. Sometimes I do not understand some of your decisions – if I can get it into my head why you do what you do, then I can appreciate some of your decisions better, you only do what makes sense to you.

This explanation, via the use relevancy, attempted to illustrate how through discerning the motivations and perspective of others, we can begin to gain a better understanding of why they may do what they do, even or particularly, as in this instance, if it is something you find inherently unacceptable. A better understanding of how this kind of thinking is manifested might enable someone to anticipate or perhaps alter/curtail its development. A deeper inquiry into the socio-cultural context of diverse perspectives is fundamental to making meaning of our own and others decision-making, historically, now and in the future. In another classroom interaction, a student had expressed an interest in a
particular topic, to which Bert replied: “You like that because it is vague! Not everyone is you. I wouldn’t want to, it is too nebulous for me. I appreciate why you want to do that, though not everyone would.” In this instance he demonstrated his personal cognizance and respect of the student’s perspective, while pointing out his perception of its nonconformity.

Instructional approaches such as individual and/or panels of speakers, debates and the role-playing of specific people and/or positions were opportunities for teachers to facilitate and reinforce both perspective taking and collaboration. Students were encouraged to conduct research to determine the background and views of the speakers, positions and roles, in order to experience meaningful interactions and authentically communicate with the speakers and each other. Though not all teachers utilized speakers during the time I observed their classes, all of them did express an interest in doing so and commented on the lack of time and familiarity with available resources as an inhibiting factor.

The teachers encouraged students to “team up with” or seek out classmates who were working on similar topics or projects. Likewise this behavior was exhibited by nearly all of the teachers by collaborating with fellow educators to create and/or conduct classroom lessons. In some instances the students witnessed and experienced a functional balance of perspectives due to the contrasting personalities and teaching styles exhibited by the teachers who were working together. On the other hand, there were instances in which the balance was not present, thereby potentially causing confusion and frustration in the students. In both instances, students observed collaborative behavior as well as the effects, both positive and negative, of working with perspectives and approaches different
from their own. Other less experiential practices, which provided students with exposure to multiple perspectives, included the use of primary sources, such as readings, video interviews and even Facebook and Twitter postings. Through these they would hear or see first hand accounts of people who had survived or experienced historical and/or current events such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Great Depression, Tienammen Square, the Kyrgystan revolution and the sex slave trade. The teachers expressed, to the students as well as myself, the importance of students being exposed to these diverse perspectives and the desire to provide them in as many instances as possible, pending time and availability of resources. In most circumstances genuine attempts were made to provide diverse accounts of such happenings. However, there were instances, which raised concerns about whose voices were being represented, and the degree to which particular voices or countries were portrayed. These instances also lacked an analysis or explanation of the complexity or consequences of such portrayals, such as stereotypes and a perceived sense of helplessness or dependence on others.

At the most basic level, perspective taking was practiced when students were asked to cite both the positives and negatives of an issue or scenario. For example, in a tax lesson Ernie asked students to identify both the positives and negatives regarding various taxation methods such as a progressive tax versus a flat tax. The level of perspective complexity arose when they were asked to explain how particular socioeconomic classes in general might respond to each type of tax and then again when given a specific scenario and framed in a more personal or relevant manner. An example of this occurred when the students were asked if teachers “deserved to be paid well” and then told the taxes would come from their income and then were told that one of their
parents was a teacher. This resulted in the examination of a variety of potential perspectives on an issue. Also employed was the concept of relevancy, in that as the issue moved closer to their own reality, oftentimes a shift would occur in their perspective, thus demonstrating a sequence of thinking skills using examples tailored specifically to the students’ lives.

Similar to relevancy and central to both collaboration and employing multiple perspectives was the modeling and emphasis on framing as a functional skill, both in the ability to construct and perceive. This communication tool was found to be explicitly addressed in some classrooms and implicitly enacted in other classrooms. In this classroom context framing was interpreted as the lens or perspective applied when presenting an idea and/or perceived when being presented an idea. Framing emerged in a number of scenarios including discussions about the use of propaganda during wartime, marketing and political strategies, persuasive writing/speaking skills and the teacher chosen emphasis on a particular topic. For example, Elizabeth framed a discussion about the industrial revolution and current unfair labor practices with how it was directly connected to the students by having them discuss where they had bought their clothes and where they were made. She then stated: “I don’t shop at …… (US company), because of their labor practices, the men are treated better than the women.” She went on to share a story of a shop (in another country) where a woman had to run around the building because she was wearing inappropriate shoes, to which there were many vocal reactions from the students. She immediately followed this by stating: “I’m just asking you to start thinking about your decisions by asking you, How do they make it, where does it come from and how do they treat their workers?” Here an issue was framed as relevant to the
students by creating an entry point through their clothing purchase choices. By sharing
her personal commitment and reasons to not go to a specific store and a request for the
students to be more deliberative in their decisions, Elizabeth modeled the behavior and
cognitive processes she wanted them to learn. In Bert’s class an explicit modeling of
persuasive framing in a lesson about political parties was employed when he asked
students to consider: “How do Political Parties attempt to influence American politics?”
For clarification he stated:

   Political parties work hard to ‘define’ the issues and frame the
   conversation, such as Sending American jobs overseas for cheaper food or
   Outsourcing American jobs.
   Other framing examples include, Do you ‘support our troops’ or are ‘pro-
   war’? Is someone ‘Pro-life’ or ‘Anti-abortion’; ‘Pro-choice’ or ‘Anti-
   life/Pro-abortion’?

Students were asked to consider how and why some statements are framed such as:
“What if I say…If we send American jobs overseas because it will keep our food
cheaper?” In addition, asking students to practice framing particular topics led to the
recognition of how language and word selection along with audience awareness provided
students with the opportunity to practice and consider the process itself. However, what
did not occur was a critical reflection addressing the impacts and potential consequences
of such practices, thereby exposing students to only part of the process. Exploring the
process of framing, how and why it is used and learning to recognize how framing occurs
in a variety of contexts, such as political, social, media, marketing, etc., emerged as an
important competency for students to master. However, if framing can be used as a
powerful messaging tool, should the consideration of this “power” and its diverse effects
on various groups and individuals in a society be explored? Framing was also used to help students narrow the scope of research and debate topics by encouraging them to focus on what their intended goal was and the means through which they planned to achieve it. By asking students to consider if their topics were environmental, economic, social or political issues the students were able to move forward less overwhelmed. In the big picture, however, limiting the opportunity to explore the multitude of potential systems being impacted by a particular event or idea, also limits the students’ ability to recognize and discover the complexity of the issues they seek to address.

**Seeking Fairness and Justice – through recognizing injustices**

Commonly referred to as teaching for social justice, what emerged in my analysis were notable frequencies of historical references, deep questions, current issues and materials that focused on the concept of injustice and mostly subtle efforts, with a few overt suggestions, to take action through interrupting the cycles of oppression (Adams, et al, 2007). Two of the participants were explicit in their passion to encourage students to question injustice and to contemplate and seek justice. Elizabeth “confessed” during her second interview to not hesitating to let her students know where she stands on certain subjects when she stated:

I’m clearly more concerned about the welfare of other people and then, you know, why our country and other countries have made the decisions that they have. …It’s just about being human. Its about caring about each other.

She was determined to inspire her students to use a “critical eye” and to ask questions such as: “why, who benefits, who suffers and who has the power?” Ernie also spoke
openly about encouraging students to use their “critical lens” and to “think about how they/we want our society to look”. Both of them enacted their passion to interrupt and pose ongoing questions to students throughout almost all of their lessons. Ernie posed this statement during a taxation lesson: “At some level this isn’t just about economics, it is a question about justice.” To be clear, I did not specifically ask any of the teachers if social justice was an important concept for them to address; rather, I decided to see how it might emerge in the interviews and classroom context. All participants made notable and varying degrees of effort to include questions and statements about injustice in their classrooms.

Social justice as a stated goal did not appear in the analyzed lesson plans or daily agendas; however, its infusion was apparent by the teacher-directed questions, examples and lesson activities. The most common instances in which injustices were addressed occurred in a historical context, through topics such as imperialism, Jim Crow, The Civil Rights Movement, industrial revolution, and the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. These topics elicited questions about or references including:

Imperialism -Kipling’s White Man's Burden and the “moral duty and obligation to ‘help the poor better themselves’ and the consequences of such ‘help’”.
Jim Crow laws - the origin of the grandfather clause to deny suffrage to American blacks, and a discussion of other unjust methods.
Civil Rights Movement – identifying and discussing the everyday heroic change agents and strategies of the civil rights movement.
Industrial Revolution - the growing gap between the rich and the poor and unfair labor practices of the industrial revolution era with connections to the same injustice occurring in today’s world.
Agent Orange use in Vietnam - the inquiry into justifications for such an action with the knowledge of its consequences.

As discussed in the previous section on questioning, sometimes the teachers posed questions regarding the fairness or injustice of the particular event, without allowing an opportunity for students’ responses. This was usually the result of timing and efforts to remain focused on completing the lesson. On one occasion, Elizabeth commented to me how well the class responded and contributed to her prompts. She then shared that many of these things, described as “justice moments” are “off the top of my head” and that she was just trying to get it all in. The questioning of “What is just?” sometimes appeared during the discussion of current issues such as taxation, labor practices, and immigration laws. An opportunity to discuss the concept of social justice was, in one instance, avoided when the teacher appeared very uncomfortable and moved the discussion along when a student shared her personal experience involving being profiled.

There were a number of resource materials and extracurricular opportunities that contained social justice themes. These included: articles from The New York Times, Upfront student magazine called “Genocide in Sudan” and “Nelson Mandela: Freedom Charter” that were used in a Global Studies class. The novel Sold, a terrifying account of the sex slave trade in Nepal and India was offered as a Global Studies research project option tracing the development, impact on culture, relief efforts and future course of this type of slavery. Sold was also read in another Global Studies class after covering WWI, to identify the social injustices that occur in the world in both unstable as well as seemingly “stable” countries. In a World Cultures class, a UNICEF article exploring global water issues and their effect on the most vulnerable was used to introduce a project
to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) promoting global awareness of the issue. In the Integrated World Studies course the students viewed a video, *Social Movements in the 20th Century*, which provided interviews detailing first-hand accounts of events and experiences during the civil rights movement. At Humboldt Academy, students were offered the opportunity to attend a law lecture discussing the book *Revenge Killing* about racial prejudice and injustice. They were also invited to participate in a Global Poverty Day.

The inclusion of social justice as a modeled behavior reflects its clear, though intermittent and often unplanned presence in the participant’s thoughts and practices. There is a sense of purpose, yet also hesitation that perhaps is guided by the positioning of themselves only as connectors to what they see as injustices and their desire to bring about this awareness to their students, even if it only involves their own “interrupting” verbal conduct. This was illustrated by Elizabeth’s comment: “It is not something I expect you do, just think about it.”

*Awareness and place: self – local – global*

Similar to the previous findings, this finding indicates all of the participants, in varying degrees, modeled and articulated the importance of local and global awareness. The concepts of local and global awareness involved having a heightened sense of interest and familiarity regarding what was going on in the world around them and at some level their relationship to it. Marie felt that as a teacher: “you look at the news, not just local and national but also international, you listen and you tune in. If you do not do that then you cannot make those links.” Those links enabled her and the other teachers to
make connections to the topics, materials, and issues being studied; historical and current, then relating them back to the students themselves. One of the reasons for this approach was an effort to inhibit the “I’m not going there, so it doesn’t affect me” sentiment present in many of their students. Through making relevant connections without having to “go there”, the teachers hoped the students would begin to recognize that they were actually part of the “puzzle”, “story” and/or “the big picture”. The awareness of self was less about their individual personality strengths and weaknesses and more about having a sense of accountability, ownership and self-responsibility in order to be a good citizen, worker, person, neighbor, etc. Ernie emphasized in a citizenship lesson that “being a good citizen begins with accountability.” The students’ self was viewed in relation to their place in the world. Marie noted what she would tell her students: “I want for you to learn about your history and your place in the world.” The participants all made efforts to empower their students by reminding them “YOU can make a difference” and by identifying connections at all levels, from local to global.

Global to self

Those who taught global studies and world cultures, (Taylor, Marie and Elizabeth), focused mostly on navigating students from a global awareness lens back toward their sense of self and place. (Figure 4.1) Explicit questions such as: “Why should we care about other people’s freedom and technology being barred?” and “How does OPEC’s control over oil affect the US and you today?” were posed as well as statements urging students to connect and gain a global awareness in order to better understand what is going on and why it might be occurring. There were reminders that
what they may hear as an issue in one country, such as China, are actually universal issues that many countries face such as drugs and border problems. Even those issues and others such as pollution, poverty, and political unrest, are borderless and can significantly affect other countries, including their own. All of them noted a desire to include more local connections, lamenting the lack of time and their own difficulty keeping up with what is going on in the world. The world/global studies teachers all noted how popular the end of the year was for students because they were able to include more current events, and therefore make more personal, local, and global connections. This observation indicates the students have a higher level of engagement and relate better to the topics when they experience a sense of relevancy.

**Figure 4.1 Global to self**

*Self – local – global*
Ernie and Bert’s government course focused more on one’s self in relation to the local extending outward to the global and back again to national and/or local (Figure 4.2). Ernie asking a question such as: “How can you make your neighborhood better?” would initiate a discussion and scenarios about supporting local businesses through “buying local”, saving money and investing and helping your community. Through asking students to process the “how to’s” of being an effective citizen, such as “How do you register to vote?” and “How do you change policy?” the students were able to relate more directly to the process rather than simply defining the concepts. Next they would guide them toward examining these types of questions at the state, national and global level. Here they would consider topics such as how the US interacts with other countries in general, as well as what could be done to address the world water crisis. The inquiry process would then be directed back toward the student and their community.
The U.S. History course, perhaps because it was a review class, moved mostly from national to global to national with occasional references to state or local level. This modeling emphasized the importance of global connections by considering the national and global impacts of Imperialism, the Great Depression, Industrialization, as well as global perceptions of the Civil Rights Movement. For example, Bert discussed Russia’s questioning of the U.S. claiming “freedom and equality for all”, yet clearly not demonstrating such a position in its treatment of black people throughout its history. Occasional references were made to specific local and state political figures that had played important roles in the previously mentioned topics.
The findings in this category recognize that teachers, regardless of their subject matter, are making explicit efforts to encourage students to look outside of themselves and the content to make local and global connections to the events and issues being discussed in their classrooms. This finding also illustrates a process of starting at geographic concept of place, such as local, and moving through the various spatial levels toward global and then repeating the process back towards the local or the self. It also raises questions about the pedagogical significance of oscillating back and forth across space and/or place as connecting strategy.

**Multi-dimensional Thinking and Linking and Complexity**

The findings under this theme reveal what emerged as one of the most prevalent strategies/processes employed by all of the teachers, which I have characterized as a form of multi-dimensional thinking and linking. This process/strategy involves the linking of ideas, topics, events, themes, eras, and issues with a multifarious combination of dimensions. Relevancy, another strategy, was also closely related to multi-dimensional thinking and linking and will be included in the discussion of this finding.

The potential dimensions that could be linked together included space/place, time, and domains/systems/forces. This strategy occurred mostly at two levels with either the teacher or the student performing the task of linking, most often the linking would be initiated by the teacher, then extended by the students. All of the teachers modeled and applied this strategy through the use of common social studies vocabulary and concepts such as; interconnectedness/weaving/threading (linking), historical/past (time),
present/current events (time), future (time), long/short term (time), relationships (linking), cause/effect (linking), metaphors/analogies/stories (relevancy), popular culture (relevancy), local/community/state/national/regional/global/foreign (space/place), location (space/place), and economic/political/social/environmental/cultural (systems/domains/forces). Dimensions were linked together in a range of combinations, from inclusion of all to the examination of only one or two. The range appeared to be dependent upon factors such as level of complexity, subject matter, time and lesson/activity objectives. A question that arises from this finding is the actual level of awareness that these linkages are occurring. That is, are they purposeful or do they occur naturally and to what degree?

*Linking through relevancy*

A primary avenue for linking various dimensions, though not always employed in this manner, was through the use of relevancy. The teachers strived to create a connection between the topic and current happenings throughout the world, while realizing that many of their students simply did not seem to care about what was happening in the world. Some of the teachers’ awareness of this gap and the concern that adding another element to the topic might only serve to create a larger gap proceeded with an effort to create a level of personal relevancy. One of the teachers emphasized the natural interests of students being kindled as a result of establishing human relevancy, or things humans can relate to. In general though, they described relevancy as a way to relate or apply what is being studied to their students lives in order for them to have a better understanding of
it or interest in it. This personal relevancy offered a broader range of potential connections, as Marie noted:

I do try to pull in a lot of relevancy and what’s going on in their life. If its going on in their life and they can connect it to the classroom, then their understanding is richer and deeper.

Bert described it also as a multi-cultural approach when he stated:

So, you know, you make those connections. Of course, you know, then you have some students who are from different parts of the world, or their family is … you try to include them. Of course you try to make it relevant… if some people have personal connections, we certainly try to tap into those.

Relevancy was also employed as an effort to make topics less complex, as Elizabeth believed: “Once you show them the divisions and you show them how to apply this to their lives, then they’re more willing to understand it and want to be involved with it. Its not so abstract or overbearing.”

In the classroom, teachers used personal relevancy as an entry point to a topic, as a clarifying tool when connections were not obvious and as a closing strategy for reinforcing the topic. Teachers would use pop culture and artifacts to create student interest, such as when studying the Cold War, Taylor sharing how a dance partner on Dancing with the Stars had mentioned living “behind the Iron Curtain.” In another instance, Elizabeth relating the “beatniks and hippies” of the 50’s and 60’s to current “non-conformists” such as “emos” and “Indie people.” As an exercise, while examining the then and now effects of Industrialization and labor, the students checked the tags on their clothing to identify where they were made and discussed the current labor concerns
in those particular locations. Other efforts included identifying specific current event articles that relate to the students in their classes such as: “Principal and parents take kids off Facebook” and “2010 World Cup: Economic Boom or Bust for South Africa.” Deeper levels of relevancy and connection were attained by assigning projects that centered upon specific areas of interest and concern for the students. An example of this occurred during the banking and housing crisis. Marie sensed many students in her Global Studies class did not understand the effects because their parents had not lost their jobs and they had not felt or seen anything change. So while studying the depression between WWI and WWII, she had them do a personal and community economic project, which led to multiple connections and a deeper understanding about what was occurring at the time.

Another example of reaching for a deeper level of connection through personal relevancy occurred in Ernie’s class as he asked individual students to think about what things needed changing in their own neighborhoods. He then proceeded to link their personal stories to illustrations, historical and current, of how other young people had moved forward and made change happen.

It was clear that the teachers recognized the value of relevancy for their students and as the next sections will discuss. There are questions of whether it was consistently employed and what role it could play in deepening the multi-dimensional connections.

*Linking across time, space/place, and systems/domains/forces*

**Across time**

This finding indicates there were various combinations of multi-dimensional linking of ideas, topics, events, perspectives, themes, eras, and issues. The most basic
level of linking occurred across time. In these instances, teachers and/or students would connect events or topics such as historical references, then and now connections and predictions about the future. The teachers would refer to various time periods when comparing different leaders in a country, such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in China. Another example was discussing the U.S. use of Agent Orange during Vietnam and asking the students who else in history was known for purposefully destroying the land as a military strategy, to which the students replied: “Napoleon and Stalin.” Other temporally natured questioning addressed the difference between thinking about only the short-term versus the long-term effects or relating back to a previous lesson to create a connection.

**Across space or place**

The other basic level of linking occurred across space or place. In these instances, links would be made between here and there or there and there. Examples included: discussing the impacts of Industrialization in Europe and in the United States or a current event such as the worldwide impact of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. Usually, as one might expect, connections were made across both space and time, such as in the cases of the short and long term effects of Industrialization and the Japanese disaster on various countries throughout the world. Both of these linking strategies were usually employed during lectures, discussions, explanations and other teacher-centered moments, thus describing the earlier identified theme, teacher as connector.

**Across time, space and systems/domains/forces**
The most complex level of multi-dimensional linking that occurred involved examining various systems/domains/forces across either space and/or time. The predominant systems/domains/forces examined in these social studies classrooms included economic, political, social, environmental, cultural, institutional, technological and information. Within each of these were sub-systems/domains/forces such as international trade, political parties, community, resources, values, education, electronic and media, respectively, though they were less emphasized than the larger systems. These systems/domains/forces were used as both a cause and effect variables. For example, as Taylor discussed with her students the closing of a company in the southern portion of the state, she asked the students to consider the economic forces that contributed to the closing as well as the economic impacts. The teachers’ use of such a strategy enabled their students to relate and consider multiple events, perspectives and systems/domains/forces across space and/or time, thus providing a holistic or “big picture” perspective of the past and present world. Through both modeling and student projects this complexity generating approach occurred at three levels:

*Level One* - teacher as connector

*Level Two* - student as connector through application - class lessons

  (applications with analysis/synthesis)

*Level Three* - student as connector through authentic application

**Level One – Teacher as connector**

*Level One*, as discussed earlier, relied on the teacher’s active efforts to create and identify the complex connections. During a “Global Current Events Day” as the students shared their articles, Marie would interject comments and questions to create and
highlight these complex links. An article discussing the austerity measures Greece prompted her to offer this:

Do you remember when we did the European union? They were coming together for economic reasons and Greece was late coming into the European Union. How do the other countries feel about bailing out Greece now that they have fallen behind? Do you understand the background on the reforms? So there is a history thing going on here…

In this illustration, I have highlighted the concepts that she encourages the students to reflect upon from previous lessons, economic and political forces, different countries’ perspectives and historical knowledge. In another example, Bert, while working with a student on a writing project addressing global microfinancing, presents a number of questions to highlight the range of connections in her topic by asking:

If we just say we are going to take our tax dollars and send them overseas, how do you think that will be received? How can we sell them on this idea? Economically, what does America need a lot of, okay… oil, maybe they could help us. Why does the US government have to support microfinancing? Why can’t we just let private Americans give donations, why can’t the people just do it on their own? This could help the whole world economy, if they have more money what might they start to do? Yes, buy more from us!...

Here, he links the potential perspective of taxpayers, the economic systems of two countries and the world, the political systems of two countries, and a natural resource to illicit a deeper level of relational thinking on the part of the student.
Level Two – Student as connector through lesson application

*Level Two* shifts the act of linking to students through classroom lessons/activities and the role of the teacher becomes more facilitative. Students are provided with scenarios and asked to identify the connections between a variety of elements. Prior to a lesson, Taylor had asked if I had any suggestions for how to have students examine three areas that were affected as a result of Agent Orange being used in Vietnam. I asked her why she wanted them to examine those three areas. Her response centered on helping them to make connections between the three areas. I then asked if she was familiar with a Venn (three overlapping circle) diagram. She seemed to react positively to this comment, so I decided not to make any more suggestions, except to ask if she was familiar with other similar diagrams. Below is a detailed narrative, excerpted from my journal, of what she implemented in her class on the following day:

May 10, 2010 - … Today I observed Taylor’s class. Their actual assignment involved each of the student’s researching the impacts and effects of Agent Orange on the people, the environment and the economy during the Vietnam Era and to write a three-paragraph essay. When I came in to observe there was a Venn diagram on the board. In each of the circles there was one of the headings “Environment, Society, Economy”. Each circle was completely filled with student examples of the effects of Agent Orange. Most notable, however, was the center section where the three circles overlapped. Written in this area were the words “still problems today”. The inclusion of this statement reflected the idea of connecting across time and recognizing the impact of actions taken in the past on the world today. When I asked her about the context through which this statement came about she stated they had run out of time so they decided to include the “present” in the overlapping area of the
diagram in order to show that all of the areas continue to be effected in today’s world. We did not have any time to discuss the previous classes response to the activity before the next class started. She began the next class by stating, “So we have been kind of talking about how the environment, humans and the economy interact with each other, so today we are going to create diagrams or charts which identifies how Agent Orange impacted each of these areas.” They began discussing the assignment immediately while Taylor moved about the room reminding students to look at the connections and to “make sure they link the areas and not just look at them individually.” Though I was not collecting data on the students I could hear comments and words such as, “society”, “that’s like over all”, “it all ties together”, etc. The noise level increased and based upon the tone of some of their voices the frustration level increased as well. At this point Taylor instructed them to begin putting their charts and diagrams on the board and encouraged the students control the flow of the discussion. She acknowledged for them the difficulty and challenge in deciding where information should go on the diagrams/charts and the “best” place for it to “go”. After approximately ten minutes she resumed her role as the lead speaker and began to read what the students had written on the board. (See Figure 4.3)

Starting with social/society the following are some of the specific entries she read from diagram on the board:

**Social/society** – forces them to move and leave homes; not healthy for them, still have birth defects and cancer; hurt US’s reputation, because we killed a bunch stuff; people died from lack of food; lack of jobs, lack of food

**Economic/economy** – couldn’t rely on fishing for jobs; cost of rebuilding; agriculturally focused, no crops, no money
Environment – destroyed forests and water; nothing to hold soil in place; animals would also eat plants and be poisoned/starved; chain reaction

Some comments shouted out by the students as she went over the impacts included questions/statements about how they were supposed to figure out which circle certain effects were to go in (showing recognition of overlap), a question about whether they were just talking about Vietnam or other places as well (linking across space and time), and a specific comment/question: “so it basically all ties in to each other, environment connects to society!?” Taylor then asked if the government took any of those things into consideration when choosing to use Agent Orange, to which some students stated: “only the short term effects because the US is still paying money to veterans,” thus linking across both space and time. She then moved the discussion toward the ongoing BP Oil spill linking a completely different though relevant issue across time and space.

Another example of Level Two linking was a role-playing activity, in Ernie and Bert’s Government course. The students discussed the political responsibilities of the three branches of government (legislative, judicial and executive) across all three levels of government (local, state and national). The students were assigned governmental positions held by real people. Their task was to research the particular position and the person currently occupying it, then during what they referred to as “dramatic inquiry” the students were to apply their knowledge using specific evidence and arguments by playing the role of the position/person and synthesizing the various levels and branches. The topics they were addressing were: “Which office in this country is most influential?” and “How do these branches/levels interact with citizens?” The result was a highly interactive, non-scripted, yet informative session that both Bert and Ernie served as
moderators, encouraging and facilitating interactions between the various role players. In one instance, Ernie interjected to help a student clarify her role by asking a series of questions that allowed her to discover the power of her role as the leader of the minority party. Bert then attempted to prompt a reaction by asking who or what can be done to “shut her up”. Comments were also made reminding the students to include current decisions being deliberated and actions being taken. Here the students were actively engaged in connecting their knowledge about the person/position/branch/level, using references to both past, present and future issues to thoughtfully interact with others who were applying the same skills with different, yet overlapping knowledge. The level of complexity in this activity was based directly upon what each of the students knew or didn’t know and their ability to apply their understandings to effectively communicate and learn from each other. Other instances, described to in previous findings, were lessons about the Industrial Revolution, Political Parties and the Civil Rights Movement, in which the teachers would lead and encourage the students toward identifying the short and long-term causes and effects, the concurrency of multiple events and their association with a variety of places as well as the possible connections of such events/eras to themselves.

In both Level One and Level Two, the teacher served as the primary or initial connector. This occurred for a variety of reasons, such as the frustratingly and straightforward reality/feeling that there was not enough time, therefore it was more efficient or that they needed to move the students’ thinking along with questions such as: “Have you tried looking at it this way…?” or “Are there other groups who might have an opinion about this…?”. In addition, a perception that three of the five teachers held was
that their students were not developmentally ready to deal with the complexity of understanding or as Elizabeth stated: “seeing how so many things can be going on at the same time and how that influences events/ideas and responses.” Along a similar line of thinking was the viewpoint that the students still had an “all about me” and/or “its not part of my world today” attitude and general lack of “real life” experiences, therefore restricting their ability to make connections.

These two sub-findings which discussed the Level One and Level Two linking behaviors indicate the existence of an active role for the teacher in helping students to navigate the complexity and the challenges they both experience while trying to think about and link events and issues with a variety of systems across both time and space.

![Figure 4.3 Agent Orange Impacts](image)

**Figure 4.3 Agent Orange Impacts**

**Level Three – Student as connector through authentic application**

This sub-finding indicates the social studies teacher’s *Level Three* strategy to support the *student as the connector* was the most comprehensive approach practiced in the social studies classroom thus far and emerged as two different levels or dimensions,
based upon its authentic application approach. This approach involved the application of nearly all of the skills and knowledge obtained throughout the course and/or school year. That is, all of the functional, critical, creative and social-emotional skills, various components of the ways of being, the competencies attained through the teacher’s modeling behaviors and lastly the connecting of events/ideas across space, time and systems. All of the above were brought together and applied in the form of an authentic assessment (Figure 4.4). This holistic endeavor occurred in Marie, Ernie and Bert’s courses and was a long term planning goal for Elizabeth.

Traditional Assessment------------------------ Authentic Assessment

Selecting a Response ------------------------ Performing a Task

Contrived ---------------------------------------- Real-life

Recall/Recognition -------------------------- Construction/Application

Teacher-structured ----------------------------- Student-structured

Indirect Evidence ----------------------------- Direct Evidence

Table 4.4 Mueller (2011) TA and AA Attribute Continuum

Mueller’s comparison between traditional assessment and authentic assessment characterizes their attributes as a continuum. Likewise, the representations of authentic assessment in this study share similar attributes but fall in various places along the continuum. Both of the exemplars that will be discussed were clearly toward the right end of the continuum, with the most meaningful departures occurring in their conceptualizations of the projects and second attribute named real life.

Authentic assessment, for all participants, was summarized by Ernie when he stated:
It’s like taking knowledge, turning it over, owning it in such a way so that they feel like they have a connection to it, and then doing something authentic with it, and I wish I could… I want to keep like taking this concept and keep applying it to every other project that I do, like okay, its not that you do this, so that, now you know this, it is what do you do with it? …demonstrating pure, I mean this is scholarship. I think that’s what scholarship is supposed to be, so the learning, doing and demonstrating, see them learning by doing, and I love that! And the connections that they make are really impressive, really, really impressive.

In Ernie and Bert’s first mastery project, Designing a Sustainable World and Marie’s end of the year Global Studies project, the emphasis was on “demonstrating and doing.” The students’ application of skills and knowledge was directed towards authentic research and presentation. However, their second mastery project, The White Paper, moved closer toward the real life attribute associated with authentic assessment by having students interact with “legislators and executive agencies in order to propose or support a bill, a bill that already exists, or amend a bill that is already out there”

_Application through authentic research and authentic presentation_

Illustrations of this finding will be addressed by first discussing Bert and Ernie’s Designing a Sustainable World (DSW), Integrated World Studies mastery project, then Marie’s Global Studies, end of the year project. Lastly, I will discuss Bert and Ernie’s White Paper, Government mastery project. The (italicized) words placed after descriptions represent the skills, knowledge and concepts that have been discussed and described throughout this chapter in an effort to highlight their existence in the projects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of linking</th>
<th>Based upon</th>
<th>Method/Activity/Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level One</td>
<td>Teacher as connector</td>
<td>Lecture, Discussion (Current Events and One on One mentoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level Two</td>
<td>Teacher as connector and student as connector</td>
<td>Interactive discussions, Dramatic Inquiry (branches and levels of government), Analysis and Synthesis (Agent Orange)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level Three</td>
<td>Student as connector</td>
<td>Authentic Research and Presentation (Designing a Sustainable World [DSW] and End of the year Global Studies project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student as connector</td>
<td>Authentic Application (White Papers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Levels of Linking

The Designing a Sustainable World mastery project for Ernie and Bert’s Integrated World Studies class occurred immediately prior to the study; though I was already familiar with its existence, I allowed it to emerge as naturally as possible from the discussions about their Government mastery project, The White Paper. I was also given the DSW project overview and student instructions document for analysis. Described by Bert as an authentic study and authentic presentation, it examined the globalizing world through “political, economical, social and cultural factors” (linking systems) by looking at a problem (critical thinking) and looking for potential solutions (creative thinking). He stated it also connected to the state of Ohio’s push for

…21st Century classrooms, it’s hard to think of a better subject to study then the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They include the entire world, but it also can have a focus back here. Because you know, there’s such an extreme of poverty and hunger, or they say gender inequality or environmental sustainability or global partnerships, all of those issues affect the United States and could be affected by the American system of government.
The project gave students the opportunity to select one of four they offered out of the eight MDGs; they felt limiting the choices would create more opportunities for the students to collaborate on a topic. The offered MDGs included,

MDGoal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger  
(Global Economic Equity)

MDGoal 3: Promote gender equality/empower women  
(Global Social, Political, and Educational Equity)

MDGoal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability  
(Ecological and Societal Sustainability)

MDGoal 8: Develop a global partnership for development  
(Collaboration Between the U.S., Global Institutions, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Each student chose one MDG and was responsible for addressing the essential question for the unit which stated:

What are the design challenges in a globalizing world to make it sustainable for all mankind? (issues, space - global, systems) How can they be addressed and resolved? (problem solving and solution seeking)  
Let’s look at this question more closely: It means--What can we do as a rich, influential nation to help design a better global society that is sustainable for our species and the sustainability of our ecosystem? (across systems) What can we do as a school? (local) As individuals?  
What are the challenges inherent in designing such an approach to solving this dilemma? (critical thinking) How can we meet and overcome these challenges? (creative thinking)

In addition to the essential question were critical sub-questions (events and ideas) pertaining to the

- transformational effects on culture (systems)
- global peace (*across space*)
- economic development (*systems*)
- role of political units such as the European Union and economic institutions such as the World Bank in achieving the goals (*across systems, across space*),
- types of collaboration needed for humans to reach the minimum standards of health, personal security, economic and social opportunity (*across space, functional skills, across systems, social justice*),
- protect and promote human rights (*issues, social justice*),
- connections between humans and a deteriorating ecological sustainability (*across systems*)

Lastly, objectives for the DSW project also included the demonstration of essential skills such as research, data analysis, critical thinking, verbal and visual communication skills, self-management and organization, technological literacy and source analysis. Their final product objective was to create a iMovie, that addressed all of the above elements and was presented to fellow students as well as invited community members, thus making both the research and the presentation authentic acts of, as Ernie put it, “demonstrating and doing.” In Marie’s Global Studies classes, in both the regular and the Honors, the students were assigned an “end-of-the-year” project that was designed to apply the skills and knowledge they had acquired throughout the school year and to prepare them for their traditional final exam. Marie shared her objectives and motivation in assigning this project by stating:

> I really wanted them to make the connections from the past to the present, pure and simple. I teach history, so they get the relevance of it, and if you look at rigor and relevance, and you’re building relationships with the
students, you want them to understand that history is significant. You’ve
got to make the connections. It’s better than a paper test. It’s a true
assessment. My ultimate goal is they can understand the past, as our
indicator of the future.

The project required them to create a product, such as a scrapbook, film for Global
Studies (GS), and a game/video and a paper for Honors Global Studies (HGS). The
criterion for each course differs in its level of complexity. The HGS students were to
select five historical events from different time periods and one from the present (their
choice). Then identify which of the following “recurring” themes would apply to all of
the events:

- Political and Social Features of Different Empires (*linking systems across
time and space*)
- Rise and Fall of Major Empires (*linking systems across time and space*)
- Reasons and Consequences of Military Conflict (*cause and effect*)
- Political Revolutions and Independence Movements (*linking ideas across
time and space*)
- Social Traditions, Social Reforms and Economic Influences (*linking
 systems across time and space*)
- Development of Trade and Trading Networks (*linking systems across time
 and space*)
- Development of Technology and the Impact of Life Expectancy
  (*linking systems across time and space*)

Extra credit was offered if they were able to incorporate their own community’s history
into the project (*linking across space and time*). Through a game or a video format the
students were to demonstrate their understanding of historical links and interdependency.
As an extension, they were to explain how understanding these connections could help to predict the future. Similarly the Global Studies’ classes were to choose three themes and link them to one of thirty current day topics. The themes for this course included, Globalization, New Ideas, Changes in Society, Religion, Imperialism, Nationalism and World Conflict and some of the topics included; Global Warming, Terrorism, Human Rights, Medical Research, Trade, NGOs, Urbanization, Ethnic Conflicts, Exploration, Scientific Advancement and Use of Natural Resources (linking ideas/events and systems across time and space). Their scrapbook/movie needed to include real human stories, photos, maps, dates, descriptions, explanations of how the themes linked every together and a personal reflection that also linked the past to the present (relevancy). The projects Marie’s students were assigned to complete assessed the ability to demonstrate their understandings of the complex interconnectedness of the world they live in, historically, currently and in the future. Though she did not describe them as such, both could also be considered authentic research and presentations, due to the application of functional skills and knowledge to address and identify real connections and present them to an audience of their peers.

The findings at this level of application indicate that teachers recognize and implement projects that encourage the students to make connections as a form of assessment. It also signifies the value of an authentic or real application by all three of the teachers. This finding also raises questions about what are perceived as viable solutions, what is connectedness and how should it be addressed, and are there correct and/or incorrect responses either of them? In Bert and Ernie’s case, remaining questions could be addressed during the next course with the same students, whereas with Marie,
they remained unaddressed. Still, both give students the opportunity to apply their understandings of what they have learned and to think in a much broader context.

**Authentic Application**

The final and highest level of connective processing occurred in the Government classes taught by both Ernie and Bert at Humboldt Academy. The student’s mastery project, The White Paper, guided students through the process of linking their previous inquiry (applying their functional, critical, creative thinking skills across issues, systems, space and time) and presentation efforts to a deeper, more personal goal of advocating as a change agent for the issue they would choose. This project was a culmination of the previous Integrated World Studies master project, Designing a Sustainable World and what Ernie described as the Government course objectives:

…my government class is about teaching students the tools on how to bring government down to their level, how to like not be afraid of it, and how to make connections and communicate with people in power. How to throw the levers of power to get what you want, and so that actually requires sort of a deconstruction of what politics is.

This *deconstruction* process also consisted of a complex series of interconnections throughout the American government system. It began with the CIVITAS lessons, that connected the students to a sense of belonging to their community, then moved to the larger American system of government, where they weaved their curriculum through national, state and local systems. This integration highlighted the personal relevancy of government and the empowerment of the individual to interact with the various systems within each political level. This was realized through the analysis of each level and “the
political actors, the political arena, political groups, political systems, political institutions
and pressure groups” within each level. The culmination of this political process
exploration and the DSW process and authentic presentation resulted in the students
being presented with the authentic opportunity to interact with legislators and executive
agencies in order to propose a bill or support and/or amend one that already existed based
upon an issue of personal concern to the student. In some instances it was directly
connected to the DSW issue (global to local), in others the issue derived from the
CIVITAS process (local to global). In both processes the students experienced personal
sense of connection to the problem and therefore were committed to identifying ways to
promote its support or alleviation, depending upon the issue and pathway chosen. Topics
included promoting educational opportunities for women and girls, nuclear energy as
alternative energy, supporting solar innovation for their state, a permanent joint selection
committee on hunger, local zoning standards, mitigating local and/or global poverty,
access to water, microfinancing, etc. The White Paper actualization process itself
required the students to reflect upon a series of extensive questions including:

What is the problem? Should the government solve it? Why? Is it
appropriate for your age group, community standards and the current time
frame? What is the scope, intensity, duration, resources at stake and who
else is interested in this problem? What level of government can resolve
this problem?

From there they joined with other students to “further flesh out the details of the
problem”, addressing the scope, intensity, duration, resources, and the political
background of the problem. The students then returned to researching and working on the
problem as individuals in order for each of them to experience authentic interactions outside of the school and to produce individual White papers. They did meet with either Bert or Ernie, depending on who was their teacher, in one-on-one intensive interactive feedback sessions, which were described earlier in this chapter in both the feedback and question modeling findings. The final product consisted of a thoroughly researched and purposeful document designed to address and provide a viable solution for a current local, state, national, global issue or problem. As a tool of participatory democracy and the mastery application assessment for the American Government course, these White Papers would only be “evaluated if submitted to a local, state or federal legislature,” thus establishing the authenticity and application components of the course and overall goals identified by both Ernie and Bert in their conceptualizations of the purpose and goals of social science.

This finding clearly indicates the teacher’s modeling and emphasis on the entire interactional and linking process involved in the final authentic application assignment. The student’s application of all of the skills, tools and understandings acquired throughout the year were indicative of what had been taught, modeled, reinforced and practiced by both themselves and their instructors, thus illustrating the levels of complexity that could be achieved through such a structured, yet open-ended classroom environment. It also highlights the points of departure between the three schools and the individual differences in strategies of the participants. The three who did not implement the same level of authentic application, all aspired to in their conceptualizations of the purpose and goals of social studies and were able to actualize varying degrees of
application in their practices. It raises further questions regarding what accounts for these differences and how they could be bridged.
Chapter Five

What are the potential connections between social studies and sustainability education?

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter will be to address the third research question posed in this study.

*What do social studies teacher’s conceptualizations and classroom practices indicate about the potential connections between social studies and sustainability education?*

The introduction of this dissertation acknowledged the supposition that a relationship already existed between these two interdisciplinary educational frameworks. This was based upon my experiences as a social studies educator as well as my scholarly exploration and transition toward becoming a globally minded educator. As a social studies educator, I became familiar with the purpose, content, expectations, and pressing issues within the various social studies disciplines. Likewise, as I progressed through various fields of study, such as multicultural education, educational psychology, urban education, political geography, teacher education, decision-making science, environmental education, global citizenship education, global education, and sustainability education, I began to see what I perceived as the *bigger picture* in relation
to the potential role of social studies education. Drawing on all of these experiences and explorations I became most curious about this relationship, did one really exist and to what extent were the connections, thus prompting me to pursue this topic as one of my dissertation questions.

The terms explicit and implicit will be used to clarify the manner in which an interpreted connection was made between social studies (SS) and sustainability education (SE). These findings suggest that the social studies teachers who participated in this study made both explicit and implicit connections in their conceptualizations and practices, to sustainability and/or sustainability education.

Explicit is defined as:

- Fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied.
- Fully and clearly defined or formulated: readily observable.
  (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/explicit)

**In accordance with fact or the primary meaning of a term**

Implicit is defined as:

- Implied, rather than expressly stated, potentially contained
  (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/implicit?s=t)
- Capable of being understood from something else though unexpressed
  (http://www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/implicit)

I feel it is important to note that semantics, the meaning or interpretation of a word or sentence, was an important consideration for me in this study. Recall that these participants were purposefully selected for not being familiar with SE as an educational framework, therefore it was not expected of them to use the terminology specifically
associated with this framework. My approach was to focus upon the teachers’ conceptualizations of the goals of social studies and their social studies classroom practices. The idea was to identify and extensively analyze what emerged as their conceptualizations and practices with those discussed in the sustainability education literature. It was not to address the teachers’ conceptualizations and practices regarding sustainability, and/or the sustainability education framework. I chose this direction in order to seek what connections may exist naturally within the social studies classroom and teacher’s thinking. My experiences as a social studies educator led me to believe that the possibility of connections existed without having been exposed to the SE framework. I also held the presumption, supported by the literature, that most social studies educators had not been trained or exposed to SE. Therefore, I wanted to examine the conceptualizations and classrooms of teachers that I perceived as the norm, rather than the exception. Therefore, interviews, observations, conversations, and documents that focused upon their social studies conceptions and practices were used to create the initial data corpus. Through the grounded theory process of coding, constant comparison, memo writing, theoretical coding, and selective coding using the SE literature, grounded concepts and categories emerged. The interpretive and constructivist nature of this qualitative study accounts for the sensitivity to the meaning of words and behaviors exhibited by the participants.

**Sustainability and Sustainability Education defined**

The findings of this study indicate that social studies educators through their conceptualizations of social studies and enacted classroom practices both explicitly and
implicitly valued and incorporated SE concepts, themes and principles. They used many of the terms and principles associated with SE without the purposeful intent of teaching for sustainability. The pathways that this incorporation occurred were through their goals to develop essential skills and ways of being, their purposeful classroom design, their modeling through their methods, behaviors and expectations and most importantly through the complex linking across multiple dimensions of all of the above components.

In order to present these findings, clarification of what I mean by sustainability and SE is imperative. There are a plethora of definitions for sustainability, the most familiar derives from the word sustainable; *the ability to be maintained or kept going as an action or process, as in to endure*. However, the following is a more holistic definition, which embodies the essential characteristics of sustainability as I have come to understand them:

Sustainability is about building healthy, resilient communities where everyone has access to the resources needed to achieve a high quality of life without exceeding the capacity of our natural ecosystems. Sustainability involves making decisions to promote values that support long term ecological, social and economic balance, through the promotion of: Environmental conservation, Economic prosperity, and Social responsibility (KU-SfC, 2012)

Likewise, SE has incurred multiple definitions as an educational framework. The following descriptions presented by John Huckle (2004) and Jack Byrne (2000), embody the essential principles that I believe clarify its goals and objectives:

Education for sustainability seeks to develop informed, active and critical citizens who are able to balance their rights to a clean, safe and fulfilling
environment with their responsibilities to present and future generations and to other species. Such citizens should have a theoretical and practical understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens across a number of domains (economic, political, cultural, environmental) at all scales from the local to the global (local/community, national, global). (http://john.huckle.org.uk/efsdetail)

Sustainability education seeks to ensure that every student is capable of personal action at the individual and community level that takes into account the following:
- a deep understanding of complex environmental, social and economic systems
- recognition and understanding of the importance of the interconnectedness of these systems
- and, respect for diversity for “points of view” and interpretations of complex issues from cross and multi-cultural (racial, religious, ethnic), regional and intergenerational perspectives (Byrne, 2000, p. 49).

These definitions provide a brief overview of the goals and objectives sought by sustainability education scholars and researchers. They are intended to create the general context through which the following findings are presented. The final chapter of this thesis will aim to interpret, clarify, and synthesize these findings in greater depth.

**Explicit use of SE terminology and shared concepts**

* Sustainability education in action

The first finding of this chapter, which addresses the potential connections between SS and SE, suggests that the participants, as a whole, did not explicitly discuss
or integrate sustainability or sustainability education as a topic, concept or educational framework by name. Of the five participants and three field sites there were only two instances in which the term sustainability was explicitly used and discussed in the context of the above sustainability education description. It is important to note that neither participant, at any time, stated the use of a specific sustainability education framework in the creation of their lessons. These both occurred at the same field site, Humboldt Academy with Ernie and Bert. This finding is significant because it frames the previous and remaining findings as compelling evidence for the potential connections between SS and SE, specifically those based upon Bert and Ernie’s contributions.

The only observed instance at Humboldt Academy in which an explicit reference was made that embodied sustainability education principles occurred in Ernie’s classroom during a Citizenship and the American System (Government class) review session over a unit referred to as CIVITAS. In addition to the observation of this class and Ernie’s interview conceptualizations, the unit documents were also acquired and analyzed.

In this classroom, the meaning of CIVITAS itself was established as a foundation to understanding the concept of citizenship and the relationship a citizen has with their community. It was essential for the students to feel a sense of connectedness to their neighborhood and local community in order to help create a “sustainable community.” Students were asked to consider, through the conceptualization of the rights and responsibilities associated with being an active and informed citizen, how their personal habits and choices contributed to both the political and economic survival of their community. These considerations would be examined beginning with their sense of
personal connectedness to their neighborhood, and then to move outward toward their local community, their state, their country, and eventually to the global world. Then the focus would shift back again toward the connections to their neighborhood and self. Though it appears linear, the movement was more of a fluctuation between and among the various levels. This demonstrates just some of the dynamic complexities involved in exercising the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen in the 21st century. Also, within these considerations, students were asked to reflect upon the perspectives of those from differing socioeconomic statuses and the potential effects of their status on their sense of belonging and political efficacy, thus introducing into the discussion the concepts of diversity, equity, and justice. The end product, a brochure on how to be a better citizen, required the students to apply all of the above considerations and understandings, as well as the understandings of the key tools necessary to effectively participate as a citizen, and the complex nature of the American system of government. Mastery was achieved through the successful demonstration of what it means to be an American citizen with duties, responsibilities and benefits as well as an explanation of the significance in creating a sustainable community/state/nation, and their interconnectedness to each other. The discussion of this lesson and final project demonstrates the explicit use of sustainability education concepts, principles, and understandings, though it was not derived from the SE framework itself. Since, as established earlier, sustainability education was an unknown construct to all of the teachers who participated in this study. It is important to note, that though this particular exemplar explicitly demonstrates a connection between social studies and sustainability education, there is a fundamental element missing: the consideration of environmental
sustainability. The discussion of one’s personal connection to the economic and political sustainability of one’s neighborhood, community, state, and nation contains only two of the essential components related to sustainability: social and economic. Missing is the interconnecting discourse addressing the personal, economic, and political connections to the physical environment, and its role in creating a sustainable future.

The second significant exemplar in this finding, which explicitly highlighted the connections between social studies and sustainability education, is referred to as the: “Design a Sustainable World (DSW) project”. I was familiar with this project prior to the research study. This familiarity came about through previous observations and interactions as a student observer described earlier in this monograph. I did not initiate a discussion about it until the topic/project had been mentioned by one of the participants during an interview. The following sets the context for the illustration. The italicized words are the terms used by Ernie and Bert, either from the interviews or from the documents associated with the project. The Humboldt Academy yearly schedule was based on trimesters, with each instructor teaching three different courses in an academic school year. Both Bert and Ernie began the year teaching Integrated American History, then Integrated World Studies and finished the year teaching Citizenship and the American System. The timeframe for this study occurred during the third trimester when they were teaching Citizenship and the American System (Government). The culminating project for the course, which was also discussed in Chapter Four, was called: The White Paper. It was designed as an extension of the second trimester World Studies’ mastery project called Design a Sustainable World (DSW). Though I was familiar with the
existence of the project I allowed it to emerge as naturally as possible from the discussions about the White Paper.

During the first interview, both projects were briefly discussed. In Bert’s second interview I asked him to provide more detail on the project. I was also given the DSW project overview and student instructions document for analysis. Bert shared with me the origin of the title of the project. He stated that the new “buzzwords; sustainability, design, and function”, being emphasized by the school administrators, were becoming more common. In addition the collaborative decision by he and Ernie to focus on the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) prompted the title: Design a Sustainable World project (DSW). As a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) focused high school, the concept of “design” was an essential component in their educational philosophy, which called for a purposefully designed college and career focused curriculum. This social science/studies project contained numerous connections to both sustainability and principles within the sustainability education framework, thus indicating a connection between social studies and sustainability education. The DSW was described as an authentic study and an authentic presentation. It examined the globalizing world through political, economic, social and cultural factors by looking at a problem and looking for potential solutions. The MDGs consisted of eight goals designed to confront the various dimensions of extreme impoverishment and disparity throughout the world. Specifically addressed by these projects were the four goals of: (1) eradicating poverty and hunger, (2) promoting gender equality, (3) ensuring environmental sustainability, and (4) global partnerships for development. Incorporating the concept of design, the students were positioned with the task of critically assessing the challenges
and creating potential sustainable solutions to these globalized dilemmas. Embedded within these issues they would also address the transformational effects on and across cultures, collaboration opportunities, human rights, global and personal security, economic and social opportunity and the interactional relationship between the social and natural world. All of which would be demonstrated through the application of their functional, critical and creative thinking skills along with their communication and organizational skills. (DSW Unit Overview: Appendix H)

The findings here infer the designers, Ernie and Bert, had a critical understanding of a number of the principles and concepts associated with sustainability education, though they were both unaware of its existence as an educational framework or a term used. Interestingly, as comprehensive as this project was, particularly since it flowed directly into the final mastery project: The White Paper, many of the goals and terms were not directly observed during the actual timeframe of the study and therefore did not appear in the data corpus created from the interviews, observations, and documents collected during the third trimester. Specifically, the goals and terms used for the DSW project were not consistently reinforced throughout the remainder of the school year. Ernie noted this during an interview when he shared a satisfaction with the scope of the World Studies unit, specifically the projects, yet expressed the desire for it to be like that “throughout all courses.” It is also important to note that not all of the lessons and activities leading up to this culminating project were included in the data corpus, therefore the extent to which these concepts and questions were or were not reinforced in the lessons prior to the study is unknown.
Implicitly shared meanings

This finding indicates that the participants in this study implicitly discussed, taught, and included sustainability education goals, skills, perspectives, practices, concepts, and principles existent in both educational frameworks. However, they were presented in the context or through the lens of social studies and were not framed as sustainability, or SE concepts or principles. They could be described as overlapping connections between the two frameworks, suggesting that such topics are discussed even though they may not be named as sustainability in the classroom. That is, they are commonly used and salient to both social studies and SE. The meanings and applications are similar in both contexts. A memo I wrote described what I was observing in the data analysis:

A significant number of the principles behind sustainability education were present in their language and their projects, but they were not familiar with the terminology, nor the specific objectives or goals associated with SE. They were “doing it” and they essentially were not aware “it” had a name or an established framework within the context of education and definitely not within the social science/studies framework through which they were teaching. (July 12, 2011)

This would be later reinforced through the theoretical analysis of the literature. This line of thinking was illustrated by Ernie’s reaction to the interview transcripts during a member check when in a contemplative tone he stated: “I really think (pause), like I was (pause) … I wasn’t really talking about sustainability, but I was teaching them about sustainability.” Ernie’s reaction to his comments and my question regarding how his students perceived him was reflected in similar forms from some of the other participants.
It suggests the realization that they, the teachers, do not necessarily have to teach specifically about the environment or the natural world nor do they have to explicitly declare the objectives or expectations to their students in order for them to be instilling knowledge or reinforcing particular behaviors. This finding also reflected an understanding of the interconnected and holistic nature of ALL of their thoughts, words and actions, and the subsequent potential impact on students. The remainder of this section will discuss the ways in which the teachers implicitly embedded components of SE throughout their thought processes and practices.

Embedded SE connections implicitly woven throughout SS conceptualizations

This sub- finding suggests many of the characteristics associated with SE were embedded within the teacher’s conceptualizations of social studies, though not framed as SE. The teachers all expressed the significance of their students acquiring specific skills and orientations in order to succeed academically, professionally and civically. The transcendence of these skills and orientations throughout all aspects of their current and future lives was viewed as essential to them as individuals as well as their role as local, national and global citizens of the social and natural world. The Chapter Four themes: *What do I want them to be able to do?* and *How do I want them to “be” in the world?*, permeated their perspectives and appeared to take precedence over the acquisition of content knowledge. This was stated by Ernie quite clearly during the second interview member check, when he proposed that: “the ability to think or the ability to write or justify or create or produce or defend or collaborate or to do something” that is, the ability to do something is what is most important for the students to gain from their
educational experiences. The ability to do and the ways of being in the world, conceptualized by the participants, work together to facilitate action taking and authentic application, all of which are considered essential for critical thinking, action-taking, sustainability-minded citizens to possess.

What students need to be able to do to create sustainable world

The teachers explicitly stated that the importance of the following functional skills, which are implicitly connected to sustainability education and include:

1. Effectively communicating through writing and presentations,
2. Collaborating with others to meet goals and assess information,
3. Technological literacy as an avenue for inquiry and communication, while applying a critical lens and recognizing technology is not the answer or avenue for all circumstances,
4. Organizationally being able to self-manage and recognize the value of understanding it is “all about process,”
5. Applying the knowledge that “process matters” to responsible decision-making,
6. Using a variety of research skills to access data, perspectives, etc. to analyze the past and to inform both the present and the future.

All of the teachers recognized the potential capacity of these skills to improve the likelihood of creating responsible citizens along with the ability to recognize the processes they are interacting with and the impact of their decisions.

The teachers all agreed that the functional skills described above were only part of what their students needed to be successful, contributing citizens. Similar to social studies expectations, sustainability-minded citizens need to be able to use critical thought to
process the information gathered through the application of their functional skills. It was expressed that in order to address and combat social, economic, political, environmental, local, and global issues students need to be able to ask and deliberate upon deep questions such as: “Who has power?” “Whose voices are being heard and whose are not?” “What is the source of information?” and “Why does or should this matter?” The teachers’ desire for their students not to accept complacency and assumptions by conceding: *This is how it is…*, but rather to become aware of what is going on around them by identifying and analyzing the problems and more importantly actively working to create solutions. Also important was the recognition that the solutions are not only for themselves, but for those yet to come. The critical thinking skills being sought and applied in these social studies classrooms are requisite to addressing personal, local, national and global events and issues. All of which cut across all types of systems, such as economic and environmental, as well as geographic space and time.

The criterion based critical thinking skills attained in social studies classrooms are enhanced by the equally vital creative thinking skills such as, open-mindedness, multi-dimensional thinking, flexibility, multiple-perspective seeking, and solution seeking. These social studies teachers recognized the value of generating and exploring new ideas on multiple levels from diverse perspectives. In order to create current and future solutions, participants envisioned what I characterize as multi-dimensional thinking. This would be the ability to consider the complexity of how events, issues and systems are connected across time and space in order to gain an understanding about what was, what is and what could be. This was referred to by the participants as the “big picture” or “being solid in all aspects of the story”. Openness to alternative ways of thinking,
valuing, connecting, and doing allow for the flexibility necessary to plan for change and to create a sustainable world. This new reality might necessitate for everyone to, as Ernie put it: “get smart, get small and adapt.”

Lastly, but equally significant and identified as two important goals of social studies, was the understanding of each other, and striving for a better world. The skill set needed to achieve these goals emerged as socio-emotional skills. These included values such as empathy, compassion, responsibility to self and others, helping others, relationship building, honor, courage, and general values needed to be a good person. For some, this skill set was non-negotiable. For others, though recognized as important, it was also viewed as fuzzy, opting rather to encourage the identification of a variety of decision-making options followed by discussions addressing the consequences of such decisions. This strategy felt less prescriptive, thus creating a space for the examination of the above values and allowing the students to explore and align themselves based upon the processing of these discussions.

These functional, critical, creative and socio-emotional skills as conceptualized by the five social studies’ teachers in this study indicate that there is an implicit connection with similar components in the sustainability education framework. This finding provides valuable insights into the perceived skills students need to acquire in order to become thoughtful, participatory citizens for the 21st century and beyond.

Ways they will need to be to create a sustainable world

In addition to skills, these findings indicate that the social studies teachers in this study conceptualized ways in which they wanted their students to be. Moving beyond the
more passive \textit{how to view the world} into ways of \textit{being in} or approaching the world. By their very nature these \textit{ways of being} implicitly reinforce similar principles within sustainability education, thereby indicating connections between SS and SE.

Themes emerged through narratives the teachers shared about the importance of their students learning to be responsible citizen participators, localizers and globalizers, actors not just reactors, and those who recognize injustices and seek justice. Responsible citizen participators are expected to learn about and understand what it takes to be an effective citizen starting with what is considered by many as the obvious such as being law abiders, taxpayers, voters and caring about the common good of society. More importantly and beyond the obvious, this also entails meeting those responsibilities by participating, being aware of, and learning about the issues affecting the their community/state/country/world by working and standing up for the rights of others through serving, influencing public policy, and giving back to one’s community, state, nation, and the world. It is interesting that the idea of being a “law abiding citizen” emerged as responsibility. Terms that often come to mind when conceptualizing “law-abiding” include obedient, peaceful, orderly, honest, compliant, and dutiful. These concepts are not necessarily compatible with critical thought, particularly in courses that examine societies, including our own, with a history of oppression. That is, questioning historical and current oppressive practices would not be perceived as being obedient and compliant. In hindsight, further questioning may have been more insightful, though it may have been stated as an automatic response to the concept of being a good citizen.

\textit{As localizers} students are to begin making connections between themselves and their local community. Through the use of relevancy, students are able to experience and
conceptualize direct connections between what is going on in their local community and their own lives. Weekly and sometimes daily sharing of local current events occurred in most of the participants’ classrooms. Taylor’s citizenship participation projects such as attending local art and theatre productions, food drives, and participating in the school levy campaign as well as Ernie’s advisory class’ tending of a community garden all provide students with opportunities to make personal connections with what is going on in their own community. Recognizing how their decisions and actions, such as Elizabeth’s lesson in which they discussed where they buy their clothes and how they spend their free time, have both direct and indirect impact on their local community. 

Localizers from both a historical and current perspective are able to understand the local effects of national and global events such as war, natural disasters, migrations, federal policy decisions and social/political movement.

Reciprocally, social studies teachers seek to facilitate their student’s ability to be globalizers or globally-minded. Through the broad theme of globalization, students explore economic, social, political, environmental and cultural implications of both historical and current events, ideas, trends, etc. The examination of current and historical events enables students to explore and become more aware of what is happening on a global scale, and how it affects people from different regions of the world. This cross-cultural component allows them to acquire a global perspective on the world. Equally valued was the ability for students to actively navigate back and forth between localizing and globalizing. This reinforced the ability to see the big picture through understanding connections as a primary goal and purpose of social studies described in Chapter Four. It was enacted through the examination of issues and events occurring throughout the world.
and then focusing and relating them back to their nation, their community and eventually themselves and doing so in a deliberative meaning seeking way. This process was illustrated in Marie and Elizabeth’s Global History classes through the reading of the book *Sold*, by Patricia McCormick, which exposed the horrors of the sex slave system in India. Marie then had student’s research the “human trafficking industry” occurring in their own country, state and possibly their own community. All of the teachers expressed a desire to include more local and/or more global connections and awareness building, often citing concern over finding the time to do so. This desire was a result of seeing the impact of relevancy through interconnectedness at all levels had on their students learning and behavior.

This finding indicates a connection between SS and SE through the teachers’ proclivity to foster students not only to critique injustices but also to contemplate seeking to stop or disrupt their occurrence. The teachers through both historical and current lenses repeatedly expressed the importance of illuminating injustices and their own role as well as their students in doing something about it. As a *way of being*, this was interpreted as both seeing (the injustices) and seeking (justice). In this finding, instilling a sense of justice and creating awareness was apparent in all of the participants. Bert highlighted historical injustices in multiple instances throughout his history review lessons, such as voter suppression, Jim Crow laws and the colonization of Africa. However, the sharing of specific mechanisms regarding how seeking social justice might be practiced and encouraged in their classrooms was only apparent in Marie’s classroom during the lesson described above and a discussion about bullying. It is important to note I did not observe this in other classrooms, of course it does not mean it did not occur. In
the bullying exemplar, Marie shared a video and a story about a classmate of the students and his experience being teased and harassed by fellow students because he had Down’s Syndrome. In this situation, Marie and the students actively shared experiences, and sought solutions with the end result being the formation of a student group to promote an anti-bullying message. The other discussions I observed focused mostly on seeing injustices thus raising the question of their level of preparation, if any, in teaching for social justice, since it was apparent they all had strong feelings about it.

Lastly and perhaps most essential to both SS and SE is the development of students who can move beyond awareness, connecting, and understandings toward actively pursuing solutions to the issues and concerns facing their world. These actions were regarded as essential and doable all along the local to global spectrum. It was important to these teachers that their students did not feel any sense of helplessness regarding their voice and ability to make an impact. Again cutting across space and time, historical and current examples of group and individual capacity were highlighted and praised. Two examples of this were, Bert’s emphasis on the actions of “everyday” individuals throughout the Civil Rights movement and Elizabeth’s use of the NYT Upfront article: *Tweeting Their Way to Freedom* to illustrate how people are use social media to challenge repressive governments. Opportunities were offered, such as volunteering and activism (anti-bullying). Similarly, Elizabeth’s students were encouraged to identify their own passions “to go out and make change happen” by providing them with the essential knowledge, skills, and tools. There was a clear realization that exposing students to environmental, social, economic, and political problems was not enough to change their behavior. In Ernie’s American Government
class his primary goal involved creating “agents of change …through teaching students the tools on how to bring the government down to their level, how to not be afraid of it and how to make connections and communicate with people in power.” The culmination of this resulted in the generation of the White Paper, which required the students to propose or support a new bill or amend an existing one, thus becoming advocates and action takers. Though decidedly, action taking was valued by all of the teachers, most struggled with where and how to incorporate such opportunities into their curriculum, citing time, structure, funding, and student motivation as barriers to advancing this highly regarded aspect of their curriculum.

*Embedded SE connections implicitly woven throughout their practices*

This sub-finding proposes that many of the characteristics associated with sustainability education were embedded within both conceptualized and observed social studies classroom practices. Though the SS teachers did not frame these practices as representative of SE principles, their existence indicates the potential interconnectedness between the two frameworks. This discussion of practices includes course design, methods, materials, processes and interactions.

*Purposeful design demonstrates the ability to see the big picture*

This sub-finding indicates the use of purposeful design strategies as a potential connection between social studies and sustainability education. These strategies demonstrated their ability to see the *big picture*, which relates to sustainability thinking in that they are able to consider multiple components in the design of their classrooms and understand the forces that influence their students’ success both inside and outside of the
classroom. The teachers purposefully planned, integrated, and enacted the following in their social studies classrooms: end in mind planning, student feedback, differentiation, organizational/structural, and relationship building strategies. These components created a classroom in which their students could work toward achieving the social studies education goals and objectives established by their own conceptualizations and those set by the school community. The significance of the concept of design, also discussed in an earlier finding, relates to applying visionary thinking regarding what teachers want to achieve in their classrooms and subsequently creating a plan or pathway for achieving their goals. This was accomplished through the use of multiple perspectives and an understanding of the desired goals and their students’ relationship to these goals. Implicit in their design practices were a number of strategies, which align closely with strategies for creating a sustainable world.

The first strategy employed in varying degrees by all of the participants was what I refer to as end in mind or backward planning through the use of foresight or envisioning the future by understanding the impact of their daily instructional decision-making and actions on achieving their course goals. The teachers used national, state, and school curriculum standards as well as their personal expectations to visualize where their students needed to be, in terms of skills, knowledge, experiences, at the end of their lessons, and their particular course. The most extensive model of this process employed by Ernie and Bert began with their vision of what they wanted their students to master based upon the state and course standards and their desire to have their students “think about the big picture.” The following steps illustrate the process.

1. They began with 7 essential questions for the course and the mastery project:
EX - *How do the Enlightenment values, industrialization, imperialism, and nationalism continue to shape the development of human society through the 21st century? (DSW, White Paper).*

2. Identified the necessary essential skills, content and understandings.

3. Created several foundation assignments (EX - *Geography, essential understanding, objective, skill builder*) to attain the skills, content and understandings.

4. Then created mastery projects (EX - *"People on the Move" Metaphor Project*) that would allow them to address the essential questions through the application of the newly acquired skills, content and understandings.

5. The whole course culminated in a final mastery project (EX - *DSW, White Paper*) allowing for the application of ALL of the essential skills, content and understandings identified for the entire course.

6. From there, they implemented backward planning by mindfully constructing the pathway to achieve their end goals.

The second strategy involves actively seeking feedback and mediating the appropriate changes to stay on target for achieving their course and daily goals. At various points throughout established yet flexible path, checks-ins and assessments, both informal and formal, were made in order to establish whether, in fact, the students were on the same pathway and acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, understandings, and experience. Elizabeth used periodic reflective journaling and daily informal “check-ins”, such as asking: “By a show of hands, how many still aren’t sure about…?” to determine students’ understanding of the content, directions, and objectives. The results of such feedback included adjustments such as review sessions and changes of pace were made
accordingly. The ability and willingness to seek and utilize feedback is a valuable strategy when viewing and addressing issues in the classroom holistically. This strategy is equally important in addressing issues and seeking solutions outside of the classroom, personally, locally, and globally.

The third aspect of the participants’ classroom design that demonstrates a potential connection to SE involves valuing, promoting, and applying diversity through the recognition of the diverse backgrounds, learning styles, needs, contributions, and interests of their students. Ernie reflected on his gratefulness for having a diverse classroom:

I like that students get exposed to each other in different ways. They get exposed to other perspectives and viewpoints I mean it’s so rich as a teacher that when it’s not there I think a reflective teacher really feels the absence of it… I think I’m more grateful that I’ve got a diverse classroom. I think I’m more grateful because the visual evidence we have so many, our fabric is stitched up of so many types of thread.

Though the endpoint for all students was similar, the teachers, in most circumstances, strived to acknowledge the mosaic of students by tuning in to them as both individuals and members of their collective classes in order to facilitate their engagement, respect their differences, and provide an environment in which they could all learn from each other. These efforts were illustrated by such actions as Taylor’s differentiation of instructional experiences by providing visual (venn diagramming), auditory (recordings) and kinesthetic (GPS activity) opportunities for student’s to interact with the content.

Some of the participants found themselves feeling unprepared to introduce multicultural perspectives into their classrooms, leaving them to search for teachable moments.
An example is Taylor’s experience: “to learn about other people’s cultures because there really isn’t a course just to learn about multicultural education. We are just supposed to fit that into the curriculum…” This raises the question of teachers’ understanding of what multi-cultural education is and how they are expected to just “know” what to do.

The fourth connecting strategy involves seeking a balance between organization/structure and flexibility through planning and consistency. This strategy is dependent upon understanding the importance of relevancy and the unpredictable nature of reality, both inside and outside of the classroom. By providing a blend of transparency and continuity of the goals and expectations, along with the modeling of resiliency, the teachers constructed classroom environments, which more closely resembled the “real world”. Ernie and Bert’s well-planned and very structured syllabus and teaching styles were often disrupted by visitors, unplanned whole school meetings, etc. The balancing of organization and flexibility enabled them to reassess and make immediate adjustments, thus emulating the realities of everyday life. The increasing complexity of both everyday situations and local/global issues require the ability to successfully balance both structure and flexibility. Thus, they exposed their students to the skills and experiences that modeled those they might encounter outside of the classroom.

Lastly and perhaps most important for successfully implementing the above design strategies was the building of relationships between the teachers, students, school, and community in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the factors involved in creating a successful social studies classroom experience. From the beginning, relationship building and connecting with their students was a primary goal of all of the teachers. When asked what she enjoyed most about teaching without hesitation Marie
replied: “I love the relationships you build with kids.” All of the teachers made an effort to attend some of the students’ sporting, musical and theatrical events and would often ask students about them during the class. The sharing of personal stories by the teachers and the students demonstrated a high level of trust and interest in each other’s lives and perspectives. Taylor began every class with a “Good News” moment and even included it on the daily agenda written on the board. These stories provided context as well as potential content and relevancy opportunities based on their students’ interests. There were numerous instances in which I observed each of the teachers interacting one on one with the students in a genuinely nurturing manner, such as when Bert delayed the start of one of our after school meetings to meet with a distressed student whose mom had been very ill. The teacher’s also affirmed the value of their students’ feeling connected to both their school and their neighboring community. Elizabeth while discussing the high participation rate in community service activities among the seniors noted:

I think that’s a result of a lot of the clubs and the relationships with the teachers in this school…We have so many clubs where the kids just want to help. Either their community, Ohio, the nation, the world, they’re all over it, they jump, quickly.

These relationships provided an understanding of the context and factors involved in the shaping of their students day-to-day motivation and behaviors. Likewise, these relationships also created a foundation for designing and constructing their classroom environment and course goals.

The enactment of the above classroom and course design strategies indicates the teachers awareness of the multiple influences involved in working toward their goals as
social studies/science teachers. Though there are likely numerous others, these strategies
stood out among all of the participants and likewise, all relate to being able to see the
big picture. In turn, these strategies enabled them to the best of their abilities to
appropriately incorporate what they see to create a successful learning environment for
all of their students. In a similar way, creating a sustainable world, through education,
entails seeing and processing the interconnectedness of the multitude of systems at work,
and applying this awareness to individual, local, state, national, regional, and global
decision-making.

Modeling the skills, expectations, perspectives and knowledge

This finding indicates that the majority of the Chapter Four findings, which
discussed what teachers think and do through the modeling of their expectations,
represent the embedded and implicit concepts and principles shared by both SS and SE.
Section One of chapter four identified what the SS teachers perceived as essential goals
of their SS conceptualizations; these included: the habits of the heart, mind, and being.
The modeling of these essential goals, as discussed in Section Two, by the SS teachers
reinforces the importance of their acquisition. That is, they follow through with what they
conceptualize as important through their own behaviors, which directly impact their
students and daily interactions. This relates to SE in two ways: First, the concepts and
behaviors themselves are indicative of SE concepts and behaviors; Second, the weaving
together of what they want students to learn and be able to do with their own behaviors
demonstrates an understanding of the interconnectedness of what we think, what we do,
and its impact on others. This understanding indicates that these SS teachers recognize
the importance and influence of consistency and reinforcement through repetition. They go beyond simply telling students what they need to know and do, by mediating the goals and expectations through modeling.

Four broad areas of modeling were identified. They included: Questioning techniques, valuing and using multiple perspectives, collaboration and framing, seeking fairness and justice through questioning injustice, and awareness of place: self $\leq$ local $\leq$ global. Specifically the teachers modeled: critical inquiry, learning from and working with others, understanding context, valuing social justice, and having a sense of place, all represent skills and behaviors necessary to create and live in sustainable communities.

**School culture and community - RRR**

This finding indicates that the teachers were notably responsible for creating and reinforcing school culture and their classroom environment. All schools through various mediums such as websites, mission statements, motivational posters, etc. valued and worked towards a variety of implicitly stated sustainability principles. These included: Lifelong learning, creating effective critical thinkers and decision-makers, adaptability, and service to one’s community. All three schools represented in the study employed variations of the *Rigor, Relevance, and Relationship* student achievement framework originated by the International Center for Leadership Education in 1991 and implemented as a model for preparing students to succeed in the 21st century and beyond. The teachers never specifically mentioned these three concepts as a framework that they were following, however, they did on occasion use the terms themselves while
conceptualizing their expectations and practices.

The first and foremost aspect of this framework for all of the five teachers were their early efforts to focus on establishing meaningful relationships with their students based upon genuine concern, trust, and respect. They felt that the school and the community, as a whole, valued building these meaningful relationships. They were encouraged to form long-term bonds with students and to interact with them beyond the physical classroom through clubs, sports, community activities, and other extra-curricular activities. Taylor noted this when I had asked her what she wanted her students to come away with after taking her class, stating she wanted it to end on a positive note, and:

…a positive feeling about World History and thinking ‘Hey, I could go back to Ms. ---- and tell her about my life.’ We’ve built our rapport with each other so that I’m interested in what they’re doing and ‘I could go back and talk to her and she would listen’ That’s a big goal here at Zimmerman, to form those bonds with the students and just let them know every little thing they do can make a difference.

Along a similar line, Ernie described Humboldt as a school where the teachers were expected to: “insert ourselves into the lives of these kids…here every kid’s got somebody.” Similarly, students were encouraged to build relationships with their teachers as well as others in their community and even at the state, national, or global levels, such as becoming involved in a local community effort to increase local awareness about global health issues, as they did for a project in Elizabeth’s class at Carson High School.

Promoting academic rigor through higher expectations, challenging instruction and support for all levels of students was perceived by the teacher’s as a school supported goal, and in most cases was enacted by all of the teachers. An informal conversation with
the principal of Humboldt in which she stated: “We want to teach them what to do when they don’t know what to do,” thus preparing students to address the unknown challenges facing them requires both rigorous instruction and broad vision. Concern for those who struggled was apparent and was demonstrated through focused individual student-teacher conferences. However, in a few observed instances, follow through with intervention efforts did not appear to be occurring. This appeared to be less about school support and more about the teacher’s perceptions regarding low-performing students, for instance the feeling that some students just don’t care and will not do anything to help themselves. In one particular case, the teacher felt that the students and most likely their parents did not value getting an education, therefore, she felt frustrated about what could/should be done. On the other hand, such comments could be interpreted as a lack of knowledge and skills on the part of the teacher to address struggling students. For the most part, all students were held to high standards. For instance at Humboldt Academy, it was clearly established prior to entry into the school program, that the goal was for all students to be college ready. This declaration nurtured the teacher’s and student’s mindsets and norms, thus creating a school culture geared toward this goal.

The commitment to the final component, relevancy, indicates that the teachers on the classroom level, for the most part, felt supported through the school culture to work towards establishing a link between their subject areas and the personal experiences of their students. Structurally, there may have been some trepidation resulting from a perceived lack of time to interact and incorporate what they interpreted as additional content. It is important to note that each of the schools were encountering various stages of transformation, moving them all toward making high school a more meaningful and
purposeful experience. In the case of Humboldt, their more established, yet evolving goal is to facilitate the development of life, college, and work ready students through connections to local businesses, educational partners in multiple communities, including the student’s home schools. The other two schools: Carson and Zimmerman, are both in the process of moving toward the creation of smaller college/career academies and/or spaces for learning in an effort to create learning communities designed around relevance and personalization. These academies and spaces are designed to blend courses and experiences that meet the interests and needs of each of their students. These programs and opportunities include a combination of the following: health sciences and human services; collaborative spaces; art, communication and design; career and technical school (variety of programs); environmental science, technology, engineering and math; community school for struggling students; business education, leadership and law; and lastly regional learning centers affiliated with local community colleges. Therefore, evidence suggests that all of the schools are actively moving toward a full commitment to the Rigor, Relevance, and Relationship educational framework. This framework itself contains a number of overlapping principles and themes with the sustainability education framework.

This finding supports an important education for sustainability principle that emphasizes a holistic, diversified approach to creating an educational environment, which reinforces on multiple levels the individual, institutional, and community educational goals to prepare students well for careers, college and citizenship. This whole school and community approach establishes the recognition that the world is interdisciplinary,
interrelated, and influenced by an unbounded number of factors, therefore working
together as an interconnected system to educate students is essential.

**Applying what we know and the way we think**

This finding, applying what we know and the way we think, demonstrates the
connections between social studies and sustainability education through its emphasis on
application, both in the classroom and the real world. A primary goal of the social studies
teachers who participated in this study was the ability to link together the skills and
knowledge in a meaningful way and then apply it to their daily decision-making. Though
not explicitly stated by these social studies educators as essential to creating a sustainable
future, implicit in their goals and practices was the capacity to use these skills and
understandings in a more complex non-linear manner through three interdependent and
concurrent processes:

1. Being able to connect issues important to themselves and their community to
   the larger world around them and vice versa.

   This was illustrated by Taylor’s instructions during a current event activity in which she
   stated: “So we are going to do current events first. We will go all the way out to
   international and then bring it back and focus on local. Just talk to us like your friends.”

2. While deliberating the interdependent causes and effects of these issues on a
   variety of systems such as economic, social, political and environmental.
   Bert exemplified this during a lesson discussing the colonizing of African nations. He
   asked the students to consider how this was accomplished through political and

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socio-cultural means. He then asked them to analyze the positives and the negatives of these interactions.

3. And simultaneously considering the role of decisions made in the past, the present and the future on these issues.

Elizabeth’s lesson on the industrial revolution involved watching a short video clip to trigger the “big ideas” about the effects of industrialization. Prior to beginning the video she asked students “What are the effects that we see today?”

These teachers and much of society as a whole recognize that weaving together various threads of relational connectedness is a valuable competency for informed and active citizens to acquire. This was further supported by their comments and support for equipping students with 21st century skills, an educational framework advocated by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and based upon the need to prepare citizens with the multi-dimensional skills they will need to compete economically on a global scale. Aptly summarizing these skills, one of the principals from Humboldt Academy shared what she envisioned her students being able to state upon reflection of their educational experience: “Here is what I know, here is what I don’t know and now I know how to find out what I don’t know.”

Potential curriculum spaces and opportunities

This finding indicates the presence of what I describe as curriculum spaces.
These spaces are opportunities, within the observed lines of thinking and practices, for sustainability education principles to be *strategically* included, based upon the methods and concepts that the teachers were already using. These spaces demonstrate the potential connections between SS and SE in three ways:

1. Spaces for inclusion of sustainability education principles, themes and concepts.
2. Spaces for reframing current conceptualizations and practices as SE.
3. Spaces for increasing the complexity of current conceptualizations and practices.

*Spaces for the inclusion of the actual sustainability principles and concepts*

This sub-finding, the identification of spaces for the inclusion of sustainability principles and concepts argues that in many instances, the participants were including what I describe as elements or parts of the sustainability education framework and that adding *specific* concepts and/or re-designing their placement will move both their SS conceptualizations and practices toward those associated with SE. In one of my early journal entries I noted:

I wonder if identifying these curriculum spaces is a legitimate finding? It seems natural to me as I look through the data and listen to the participants to notice the places where with just a simple adjustment to their approach and/or the insertion of particular concepts, they will be a step closer to educating students for a sustainable future. It is almost a matter of completing or painting the picture that has already been started. It is really more a matter of redesign or reusing what is already there, as opposed to replacing are even adding a significant amount of new material.
In Marie’s Global History class, as an end of year project, the students were asked to make predictions about a particular current event based upon what had occurred in the past (project described in detail in Chapter 4). Here, there is an opportunity to extend this application assignment by having the students envision scenarios of a more desirable future, asking specifically what they would like to see happen. This would allow them to experience a sense of empowerment with regard to the future as opposed to the more passive exercise of predicting what will happen based only upon what has happened in the past. Reviewing and reflecting upon past events and behaviors would still be a valuable part of the exercise. What occurred most often was the examination of one or two systems, such as the impact of, or on, the economy, thereby leaving a space for examining multiple systems (social, political, environmental, and cultural) impacted by a particular event, issue, or idea. In the earlier colonization of Africa example in Bert’s class, in addition to having the students contemplate the political and socio-cultural implications, a space exists to include consideration of the environmental and economic connections, motivations, and consequences. Other strategic inclusion opportunities existed in multiple instances, specifically in the history classes, in which the teacher and/or the student could have related the topic (Agent Orange use in Vietnam) to a current (global and/or local) and often personally relevant issue (Gulf oil spill), thereby allowing for the examination of the relationships between the past and the present as well as between the student and the topic being studied.

Lastly, for three of the five participants the final transformational step in the process that they all conceptually verbalized, but in most instances did not follow through in their practices, was either authentic application and/or specific opportunities for action-
taking. These strategies were desired and the spaces for them existed; yet for numerous reasons, including lack of time in the school day/year, lack of time/connections to identify resources, and professional development, they were not implemented. For example, the students were encouraged on multiple occasions to go out and “do something” or “create change”, yet they were not provided the necessary tools, guidance and/or opportunities to follow through. Another example was a final project whose ultimate goal was to apply historical knowledge to today and use it as an indicator of the future. This allowed the students to apply most of the skills and knowledge that they had acquired throughout the year, and yet it must be asked, to what end? The space for the inclusion of a component, such as service learning and community partnerships, which required the students to “go out” into a real situation and use these skills and knowledge, exists, yet it was not utilized. The bridging of these gaps and spaces would strengthen the connections between the social studies and sustainability education framework and more importantly between the schools and their communities.

**Spaces for reframing current conceptualizations and practices**

This sub-finding indicates the existence of spaces where current thinking and practices could be explicitly reframed as a specific sustainability education goal/objective. Reframing involves reconsidering the lens through which issues and ideas are being viewed, by looking at something from another perspective, such as asking students to think about the long-term impacts of globalization through the lens of future generations, asking what will they think or how will these current actions affect them or why does this matter? Another example would be seeking solutions rather than solving
problems, which would reframe this skill from focusing on problems to focusing on solutions, thus providing a more hopeful and empowering opportunity.

The following is a list of terms/concepts/themes that appeared in the conceptualizations and/or classroom practices of the social studies teachers who participated in this study.

These terms/concepts/themes have been redefined to reflect a more sustainable lens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed SS concepts/terms</th>
<th>Reframed concepts/terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicting the future</td>
<td>Envisioning the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you think it will be</td>
<td>- How do you want it be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem or issue</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing or gap</td>
<td>Space or opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperialism/colonialism</td>
<td>Dominance/power/control over other people/countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
<td>Interactional relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakness, - Emotional, primitive, melancholy</td>
<td>Strength -Empathetic, simplicity, thoughtful/mindful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current economic growth</td>
<td>Unsustainable growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource depletion</td>
<td>Creative challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Solution seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- focus on problem</td>
<td>- focus on solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Change agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive, liberal</td>
<td>Flexible, adaptable, receptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and professional skills</td>
<td>Life skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigor, relationships and relevancy</td>
<td>Ecological thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated learning, diversity</td>
<td>Ecological thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- solution to problems</td>
<td>- assess as both a solution and ‘the problem’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual choices/decisions</td>
<td>Ripple effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants, immigrants, alien</td>
<td>Refugees of oppression, resource depletion, intolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examining decisions by linking the past/present/future</td>
<td>Intergenerational responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Applying knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily consumption choices</td>
<td>Exploitation of resources, land and people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal responsibility</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking issues/ideas/events/across space, time and systems</td>
<td>Multidimensional relational thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidimensional relational thinking</td>
<td>Systems thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Reframing toward sustainability

This sub-finding supports the assertion that social studies and SE have multiple connections and places of convergence. By reframing many of the current conceptualizations and practices of social studies teachers and the discipline itself, it
allows the teachers an opportunity to see what they do and how they think in a new light, thereby potentially opening the door for an increased interest in learning and making adjustments that may have previously been perceived as threatening or overwhelming.

*Spaces for increasing the complexity of current conceptualizations and practices*

This sub-finding supports another level of connection between SS and SE through the spaces where particular sustainability education related concepts and lessons were included, however they lack the complexity and framing necessary to be directly connected to SE. Specifically, the relationship between the various concepts and principles were often only proximal in nature, loosely bound and lacked relational substance or complexity. An example would be a teacher simply asking students to identify the effects of Industrialization and how they are relevant today. Though this question cuts across time (then and now), it lacks the inquiry into the various systems (economic, political, environmental, social, and cultural) as well as the relationships between those systems, both observed (manifest) and potential (latent.) It also lacks the element of space/place by not identifying a variety of places where these effects might have occurred such as urban, rural, northern, southern or specifically in certain countries/regions such as the U.S., South Africa and/or Great Britain. To begin to really understand the short and long-term impacts of an era such as Industrialization, a more complex approach is necessary. Other levels of complexity can be added including the identification of both positive and negative impacts and an examination of the relationship between them. For example, the analysis of a social issue, such as equal access to education and its relationship (+ and -) to the economy, or lower gas prices and
its relationship (+ and -) to the environmental, etc. Examining these across geographic and cultural spaces can increase the complexity of these issues further.

There were a number of concepts, which were explicitly associated with sustainability principles, however they lacked the complexity necessary to be perceived as such, for example, when using the term *interconnectedness* as in, between two countries. In this type of instance, there would be an effort to identify the connections, such as trade or immigration. However, to move toward convergence with SE it will be necessary to inquire further into the complex interactions and relationships between these connections. This deeper exploration could be done by examining the various positive and negative and/or causes and effects on a number of systems, such as economic, social, environmental, and political. Often, the focus would be on just one or two. Other nascent concepts conceptualized and practiced by the social studies teachers that occurred at a surface or less complex level included: flexibility, be a part of the solution; limited inclusion of systems such as economic, social, political, environmental; partial linking of time, space, systems, and self; controversial issues; interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary connections; thinking about the future, and action taking. To be realistic, there is no expectation that all systems, all causes and effects, all places, all perspectives, all time periods, and all issues must be addressed and included all of the time in order for complexity to exist. The recognition that there are multiple levels of complexity can be achieved by increasing the combination and diversity of considerations and opportunities to apply or practice such multi-dimensional thinking.

The above findings indicate that many aspects of the SE framework currently exist within what these social studies teachers were conceptualizing and practicing in
their social studies classrooms. This significant realization would allow for subtle adjustments within the social studies framework, such as, strategic inclusion, reframing lenses, and increasing the level of complexity, rather than requiring a complete dismantling and reconstruction of the current social studies framework. All of the teachers expressed general apprehension concerning previous changes and reform efforts that were required, including significant amounts of additional content or major reconstruction of current practices.

**Explicit potential for the future**

This finding indicates there were instances in which the teachers expressed an explicit connection between social studies and sustainability education. The opportunity for this expression presented itself once the discussion opened up to include sustainability principles. This occurred as a result of presenting the sustainability quotes and a more co-constructive interaction between the participants and I. They occurred near the end of the study and in some instances several months later during follow-up interviews and member checks. This is not surprising since reflection is the key to teaching and learning and all of these educators had exhibited reflective habits throughout the study.

**“A-HA” Moments**

This finding discusses the instances in which the participants experienced a reflective epiphany of sorts with regard to various aspects related to sustainability education. After a discussion about sustainability involving complex connection making,
I asked Taylor if she could see areas in her curriculum where these types of connections could be made. She shared her reflections of the potential connections that could have occurred in and between her Industrialization and Imperialism lessons. I have underlined the words she emphasized and italicized mine.

Yeah, the Industrial Revolution, we talked about them building the factories near the waterways. (economic, environmental) I know that I just kind of briefly went over that they dumped a lot of their waste into the waters. Some of the negative impacts, crowded cities, pollution, waste build up, no sewers, no city planning. (social, environmental, political) I could have gotten into way more detail, if I was thinking about it at the time. … Where do the factories go? Where do the dumps get built? What group of people had to live in these conditions, who would be most affected? (social/economic/environmental justice) We talk about it but we just don’t ever… You know maybe I’m just hoping that they’ll make a connection but I could have encouraged or facilitated more.

We continued talking about the could haves, then after several minutes she talked her way right into making a connection between the IR and imperialism:

… So, in the IR we were building all of these products. Well, now who are we going to sell them to? (economic/social) So now we go down and force these people to buy our goods, then also take everything they have.(economic/social/political- power issues/environmental-resources) How is that hurting their economy? (economic justice) And then the long term, what’s going on with those people/countries now? (long term impacts in all systems) … You know I talked about all this in my lessons. I really have talked about all this but I never brought it together. It’s SO there, but its just … I guess I’m making connections talking about it now. I don’t know if the kids have, I’m hoping they have, this is definitely…
This reflection appears to be a discussion with herself as she processes what she did, what she did not do, what she is realizing could have been done, questions whether she is just now recognizing some of the interconnections if her students had made them, hoping they did, reflecting on her role, yet realizing the potential. She went on to recognize how it would begin to become more natural for the students to make these connections if she had begun doing it at the beginning of the year and in every unit. She specifically referred to the Agent Orange activity (described at the end of Chapter 4 under Level Two) that had occurred several days earlier stating: “I think that would have helped them with the Agent Orange. I think they would have already been on a roll.” This statement is significant to this finding because it addresses the notion of complex connection making becoming a habit or a way of thinking about events/time periods. This finding is also significant in that it illustrates how, in some instances, the teachers are already teaching about sustainability principles or are right on the edge, yet are not aware of the level of complexity that they are capable of guiding their students toward doing on their own.

In the next narrative, Ernie is reflecting on whether he had discussed, implied or inferred with/to his students the: “prospect or probability of our demise as a species.” A note I had made by his comment during the second interview asked if he, through his teaching style, class discussions, etc., emphasized particular concepts or ideas. Earlier on in the quote he discusses the importance of education and relating/connecting to people:

We talk about other things being unsustainable…So yeah I guess it did come across, because I would talk about other things and you don’t have to be talking about environmental science … (reflective pause) you can be
talking about other things, like love and relationships and friendships and things like that. So really imparting to people, look this is what is important, this is what is important. It is important to have trust and mutuality...and to appreciate each other ... I really actually think, I wasn’t really talking about sustainability but I was teaching them about sustainability. What is important in order to have a civilization and what is actually going on and those things we fail to nurture, that is what is going to cause our downfall. (long........pause – 20 seconds)

Again, through the process of reflection even as he records this response to the original manuscript, he is beginning to awaken to the possibility that some of what he alludes to in his everyday teaching relates to sustainability. He wants his students to recognize that many behaviors and ways of thinking are unsustainable, there are values and relationships that must be nurtured, students need to learn to be better complex and critical thinkers, and to use what they have learned to be agents of change.

These two narratives provide a glimpse into how social studies’ teachers are able to see or recognize how their conceptualizations and practices already relate to the principles within sustainability education. This recognition occurred for the teachers once they had acquired a better understanding of what educating for sustainability entailed when combined with their innate reflective dispositions, thus uncovering another potential space or opportunity to seek further connections and understandings.

Reactions to Sustainability Quote

The final sub-finding related to the explicit connections between social studies and sustainability education emerged through the teachers’ responses to an explicit
passage referencing student connectedness, sustainability, and education. At the end of the study each teacher was asked to provide feedback regarding the following quote:

Sustainability is a dynamic condition, which requires a basic understanding of the interconnections and interdependency among ecological, economic and social systems. Sustainability means providing a rich quality of life for all, and accomplishing this within the means of nature. – Jamie Cloud (Cloud, 2009)

The reactions to this quote highlighted diverse but relevant interpretations of interconnectedness. The connection to social studies content was immediate and evident through their references made to the interconnectedness experienced during industrialization and globalization units/lessons. There was also the recognition that without an ecological system the other two man-made systems would not exist. Likewise as a result of such interconnectedness there was the realization that human sustainability itself was dependent upon not threatening someone else’s sustainability or existence. As Elizabeth stated: “this can definitely be in there (social studies curriculum) and it should be in there. It’s our responsibility and it needs to start being a bigger responsibility. We’re not just here to talk about our wonderful history.” The bottom line appeared to be a sense of responsibility on the part of all of the teachers to recognize their role as well as social studies’ role in educating for sustainability.

**Potential challenges/opportunities to actualizing the connections between SS and SE**

The following findings reflect some of the complexity and breadth related to social studies education as well as its potential connections to sustainability education. Most of the challenges for these teachers exist independently of the connection making
between the two educational frameworks examined in this study. Likewise, the identification of the connections between the two does not alleviate the challenges, nor does it necessarily compound them. This finding discusses some of the challenges experienced by the social studies teachers that could also be perceived as challenges for future connection making between social studies and sustainability education. These challenges were categorized into four sections, which consisted of School Environment and Structure, Teachers’ as Individuals, Perceptions of Students, and Larger Socio-Cultural Challenges.

**School Environment and Structure Challenges to Educating for Sustainability**

The teachers believed there were a number of challenges associated within their individual schools. The concern that cut across all of the social studies teachers irrespective of any individual or demographic differences was a perceived lack of time. Most felt pressure as Elizabeth stated: to “make it all fit,” often being left with a sense of being “out of time” and unable to inquire deeper and extend the conversation on various topics, particularly the ones the students relate to the most, including current events such as human rights, the economy, and political happenings. Marie, using her textbook, pointed out that much of the most relevant connection making occurred in the last chapter titled *Global Interdependence*. She even called attention to how well the state academic standards were represented. Bert expressed his wish to be able to ensure his student’s are really “solid in the story”, specifically in his American History course. Taylor expressed concern about the multiple demands and expectations involved with teaching when she
stated: “there are so many things to teaching besides just teaching that you get lost and some things get pushed to the side for the school and then you hope to bring them back.”

In two of the schools, individual planning time was designated as before and/or after the student’s school day, which depending on the day often resulted in no planning time because students would come in for individual instruction and in some cases students were never able to meet with their teachers because of their transportation schedules. In many of the classrooms I observed, there was a sense of urgency to keep the lesson moving. This is not necessarily a negative observation, except in many instances students questions were left unanswered, directions were rushed, opportunities were lost, and important details and connection-making efforts were left out or not quickly added to the lesson. The teachers’ perceived lack of time poses a potential challenge to highlighting and encouraging the connections between their current social studies’ conceptualizations and practices, and sustainability education. This challenge will exist if they perceive the connections as adding more content or taking up more time. The challenge of a perceived lack of time creates ripple effects into a variety of areas within the classroom as well as society.

In two of the schools professional development opportunities, access to resources, and support in implementing the authentic application of knowledge, did not all emerge as challenges in all of the settings, but they did exist. One of the participants expressed concern over the lack of what was described as current or relevant training offered by the schools, specifically the confusion over what multicultural education entailed, and the lack of guidance and opportunities from the school. There were also concerns over the lack of access to dependable technology, which inhibited the students’ technology
exposure, the development of online research and presentation skills and the analysis of a broader range of perspectives on a variety of topics covered in the curriculum. One of the participants discussed how her school had “left out” an essential educational component when she stated:

We always think about the content but we don’t think about the application. …As an 18 year old they are thinking, ‘the content means nothing until I can see why I need to use it.’ We just want them to spit out information and that is not learning, that’s memorizing.

She felt that though the school culture had encouraged connecting to the community and was moving toward action, to date it lacked providing the support such as resources, partnerships, and training to facilitate actual application opportunities.

Interestingly, what did not emerge as a challenge by these participants was the perception of the academic standards as restrictive or hindering. All of the participants seemed to view the standards as more of a guideline and appeared content with the freedom to designate the “package” or the “pathway” for achieving the objectives set forth by the standards. Though I suspect further inquiry may have revealed them as the source of their previously-mentioned grievances regarding time and content quantity, as alluded to by a comment made by one of the participants: “…so I think its also having the time and we have so much content to cover so it comes down to what I’d like to cover versus what I have to cover.”

These findings indicate from a structural perspective that there are a number of challenges faced by the teachers, which inhibit their role as teachers. With regard to their specific role as social studies teachers the inability to get to or cover material that is most
current and/or relevant to their students lives and future, students not getting the *story*, the 
lack of professional development support and resources specific to their needs, and 
rushing through connection-making opportunities all present potential challenges to 
creating 21st century citizens who will be able to work toward creating a sustainable 
future.

*Teachers’ as “Individuals” Challenges to Educating for Sustainability*

This finding asserts that another area of challenge exists with what the teachers 
bring or contribute to their classrooms as individuals. Influences such as school culture, 
the community, academic standards, demographics, and a multitude of student variables 
all effect how teachers conceptualize their subject and enact their classroom practices. 
This finding touches briefly on some of the challenges that emerged as a result of the 
teachers’ personal values, preferences, stressors, etc.

Although not a focus of this study, the teachers’ own personal identity and values 
emerged as a potential challenge when they explicitly attempted to be objective and 
value-free. When I posed questions to them regarding the teaching of values such as 
compassion, protecting the commons/environment or common good, caring, life skills, 
being a good citizen, and social justice, they all acknowledged that education was not 
nonneutral. Yet in some instances they were hesitant to openly discuss or share them as the 
following statements indicate: “As a teacher you are not supposed to share what you 
think.; …telling someone how to be a good person is not necessarily my job, that is 
getting too prescriptive; We’re here to teach you to learn and here is the material. I can’t 
teach you to be a good citizen. I’m not going to teach you values; I am not a teacher who
is going to take somebody’s money and do my own thing. I’m not going to be
hypocritical like that.” These statements reflect a potential internal conflict between what
they are supposed to do, be, and say as educators and what they do, are, and say as
individuals/people/humans. Based on what I heard and observed, the teachers’ opinions,
values, and interests were often embedded in their conceptualizations and practices in a
variety of ways including the intensity and tone of voice when discussing certain
subjects. Such as Elizabeth’s passionate examples of how their consumer choices are
directly connected to human rights violations; the outright declarations of their personal
opinions/perspectives and what they deem as important, such as when Bert discusses the
importance of presenting a professional identity; the ignoring or rushing through
uncomfortable or unfamiliar topics, such as racism and sexuality; and the lingering or
extensive coverage of favorite topics, such as when Marie chooses to spend five weeks
covering WWII. Personal experiences and influences shared in the beginning of the
study were also reflected throughout their conceptualizations and practices. Influences
such as a lack of exposure to diversity, extensive world travel, family heritage, starting a
new family, previous careers, and their family’s educational background could all be seen
and heard throughout their narratives and behaviors. Ernie’s response to my question
about how he decides what he is going to teach and how much of himself (philosophy,
beliefs) comes through in the classroom reflects what I observed to varying degrees. He
stated:

The last time we had this conversation, didn’t I say something like ‘I have
to start with the standards and I have to be responsive to the school and
community.’ But, you know after I’ve had a day like today, there was so much of me poured into that lesson.

This realization represents the gap between what they say they do, and what they really do with regard to infusing aspects of their personal identity into their teaching. I am asserting that this finding can be interpreted as a challenge because if teachers are not aware of how much of their own identity is embedded within their conceptualizations and practices, they risk sending unintended and/or mixed messages to their students. This challenge with regard to SE lies with the potential of these messages to counteract or confound what the teachers’ say and do with the goals of educating for sustainability. As described in Chapter Four, the modeling of behaviors and expectations by the teachers’ appeared to be a significant factor in the design and execution of their classroom practices. Thus if they do not understand and/or support the goals and themes associated with sustainability education or if they are unable to relate to them due to their personal values, preferences or stressors, they may not succeed in modeling them in their classrooms.

**Perceptions of Students’ Challenges**

Some of the teachers’ held perceptions that their students lacked the developmental maturity, socialization, motivation, and self-responsibility, which hindered their ability to understand complexity, value education, become active learners, and take responsibility for their learning.
Level of developmental maturity

Many of the teachers felt their ninth grade students were not developmentally mature enough to understand how events and ideas are relevant to their lives, to envision their future or to understand the complexity of thinking about multiple connections. Elizabeth jokingly commented that students: “should go out into the real work for three or four years and then come back and finish world history because then they would get it because they’ve experienced the world.” Marie felt there needed to be a higher level of maturity, such as in her honors global studies classes, in order for her to infuse geography skills stating:

…you’ve got to be able to read, understand math and to read and understand a topography map and if I’m dealing with discipline issues, they’re not getting it so we just move on. …But with my honor students, they’re ‘Oh there is water in this area’, then they can start seeing and understanding the threads throughout history and the reoccurring themes.”

Asking students to think outside of themselves or going back in history to consider events occurring at the same time around the world were met with comments such as Taylor’s: “you’re asking them to do a lot and I think with some subject matter, if it’s not tangible or it’s not a part of their world today, its too hard to understand.” Concerns were also expressed about students being mature enough to envision their own future since there were so many things for them to consider and many of them were in, as Elizabeth stated, “its all about me” place in their development.

These perceptions present a challenge in that they put broad limitations on students’ capabilities, which may inhibit their students’ learning. These limitations, in
turn, may prohibit perceived higher-level thinking and expectations associated with educating for sustainability. If they do not think their students can handle something they may not be willing or able to appropriately include it in the purposeful design of their classrooms. However, I must point out this finding is actually contrary to the findings discussed earlier in this chapter and chapter four, which suggest these teachers are in many instances facilitating complex and relevant connections as well as encouraging their students to apply high level multi-dimensional thinking. This indicates that though they have expressed doubts regarding their students’ developmental capabilities they are in many instances implicitly-teaching and practicing these very same skills.

**Passive learners**

A couple of the teachers experienced frustration with many of their students’ lack of effort to complete and sometimes even begin their work, which was often compounded with a sense of dependency on the teacher or other students. While discussing her end-of-the-year project noted that many of the students read the project and would say:

…‘this is no problem’ and then when I meet with every single kid, and they know what they are doing, they are mature and they can handle this. On the other hand…if they have poor reading skills, if they hated history, if they haven’t paid attention all year long, they want me to explain it, they want me to tell them what to do, they want me to pick their historical events and I won’t do that. They’ve been such passive learners all year long and now that they have to be an active learner, they hate it.

…They just kept saying over and over, I just don’t get it, I just don’t get it. I would love to figure out how to at least get them started doing something as opposed to them just saying ‘I just don’t know what to do so I’m going to do anything.’
Taylor also expressed concern over the students exhibiting a sense of helplessness and wondered if they were somehow trained to depend upon the teacher. She shared that it was often:

…like they were waiting for me to just to give it to them and I’m trying to instill in them to go find it. ‘Use your resources, whatever those resources are. Go out and use them. Don’t depend on someone to just constantly be giving you information.

She admitted that sometimes she would get into a rut and with so much content to get through that she would provide them with what they wanted. She also noted that: “they are overgrown eighth graders when they come in freshman year so they are used to middle school and hopefully you wean them from being so dependent on you.”

This frustration appeared only with those who had ninth grade students, thus highlighting one of the areas in which they look to build foundational skills. Though posed as a challenge, the issue of passive learners was also viewed as an opportunity. The three ninth grade social studies teachers all expressed a desire to move their students from passive to active learners. This desire highlights another potential connection between social studies and sustainability education.

**Larger Socio-Cultural Challenges/Opportunities**

Throughout the interviews and the classroom observations there were comments and moments alluding to educational challenges at the societal level. These challenges included the accountability/perception of social studies and issues associated with change. All of the teachers expressed these concerns even if only through a passing
comment. Both social studies’ accountability/perceptions and societal issues of change pose inherent challenges to further pursuit of the complex and broad connection-making and transformational change associated with educating for sustainability.

Accountability and perception

Within the context of the very early discussions about the goals and purposes of social studies, Ernie and Bert were adamant in their reference to the discipline as a “Social Science.” Their determination arose from the perception that “Social Studies” was not research-based and less complex. As Ernie stated: “Social studies seems to be what you study in middle school. And so when I talk about myself I say ‘I’m the Social Science teacher at Humboldt’ because we try to have a research based component to it.” There was also the concern about the association with middle school social studies as being only about “studying maps, making posters, and memorizing presidents”, thus eliciting a negative connotation from educational peers as well as those outside of the education system. Bert recognized that social studies had not always been perceived in this manner and stated: “…now as people are moving towards STEM I think Social Science and Social Science teachers, Government, and History teachers need to start taking themselves a little more seriously.” I contend that this statement reflects the broader issue associated with Social Studies/Science and its efforts to keep/find its place in the US educational system. Bert went on to add that the lack of testing does not put it in same standing as the other core courses thus: “I’m not saying we need a standardized test, but I’m saying we need a system of accountability. A democracy and its bureaucracy demand a system of accountability.” Hence, Bert and Ernie’s perspective and efforts to
frame Social Studies/Science as a complex science and research-based discipline moves beyond the previous perception that SS is *all about history*. Ernie also added that: “history and studying about people is important, however, so is how human organizations function. …I think there is a tendency in our society right now to use data to inform the future.” The other three teachers all seemed comfortable referring to their field as Social Studies, however, they also shared the perception that social studies went beyond teaching about history. This finding presents itself as both a challenge and an opportunity to empower social studies educators to continue to seek and secure its *place* as a discipline whose purpose is essential to the education of students in creating and sustaining the democratic principles held as one of the primary functions of social studies. Their perceptions of their field as a “Social Science” may serve to provide an opportunity for infusing education for sustainability into the field of social science/studies with its emphasis on research, complexity, moving beyond history, and informing the future. However, the contentiousness resulting from the perceived lack of relevance and rigorous practices, may serve to further inhibit securing its *place* in the US educational system.

**Issues associated with change**

This finding focuses on the concept of change and issues such as awareness, resistance and process in the contexts of social studies education and US society as a whole. Within the social studies teachers’ conceptualizations and practices it was recognized as an essential component to the habits associated with how teachers wanted their students to *be* or their *way of being* in the world. In order to be citizen participators,
localizers, globalizers, actors and justice seekers, their core role requires them to be, as Ernie stated: “agents of change” who have as a result of a successful social science education, have the knowledge and skills to “affect their system.” What also emerged was the realization that the concept of change applied not only to the students but also to the society in which they live. Comments made by the teachers alluded to some important considerations regarding change, society, and people. While discussing the possibilities of teaching about sustainability in her social studies classes, Elizabeth stated that there: “needs to be more awareness among adults before you can take it to the: it’s your responsibility level with students and it needs to be system wide. It should not just be a few of us here and there. And there also needs to be a shift in our country’s way of thinking…and a shift in leadership.” Her statement reflects the necessity for transformational change that is top down in its acquisition and execution. Ernie also expressed concern about changing perspectives regarding the dichotomy between the goals of capitalism and efforts to encourage the reduction of consumption along with the actual enactment of the practices of reusing and recycling. He shared that many of his family members, whom he considers highly intelligent people, believe climate change is a myth and have not made any changes to their consumption-driven lifestyle. He noted that even those who believe and value the goals of sustainability, such as himself, find they are often not willing or able to make the necessary lifestyle changes. As a whole he himself is conflicted as to whether the American people can change to the degree necessary to make a difference.

Many of the concerns expressed by the teachers lie within the education system itself and its often-lethargic reaction to address major problems. That being said they felt
that it was up to the individual teacher to instill in their students the significance of what is going on in the world and to facilitate the opportunities and behaviors in bringing about the necessary changes. This finding only begins to consider the challenges facing individuals, schools, communities, the nation and the world. With regard to the potential connections between social studies and sustainability education change must occur from the top down and from the bottom up.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings that addressed the third research question for this study: *What do social studies teachers’ conceptualizations and classroom practices indicate about the potential connections between social studies and sustainability education?* Connections between the two educational disciplines emerged through the teachers’ explicit use of shared concepts as well as through embedded connections implicitly woven throughout their conceptualizations and classroom practices. The existence of both explicit and implicit connections between social studies and sustainability education is significant because it provides a potentially viable pathway through which educating for a sustainable future can occur. In addition to multiple lines of convergence there are spaces and opportunities within social studies for inclusion of sustainability principles, the reframing and increase in complexity of current conceptualizations and practices toward sustainability thinking. The last section identifies challenges associated with social studies education but appear to be relevant when considering the integration with sustainability education and in some instances evolve
into opportunities. All of these findings together create multiple entry points for further consideration and investigation.
Chapter Six – Interpretations, Discussion and Implications

Introduction

This chapter will focus upon bringing it all together to create the big picture, a common theme throughout this study. This will be realized through a synthesis of my findings and their implications on social studies teaching and learning. I will also discuss potential pathways for future research addressing the relationship between social studies and sustainability education.

Summary of the study

The purpose of this study was grounded in an exploration of the relationship between social studies (SS) and sustainability education (SE). It is an effort to answer the call for identifying viable educational pathways through which to address the increasingly complex and interconnected social, political, environmental, economic, and cultural challenges facing our world, and the world of future generations. As a social studies educator I felt compelled to inquire into my discipline’s potential role in this tremendous yet imperative educational challenge. Internationally, sustainability education has been both researched and practiced mostly through environmental education or environmental science. As a known and practiced educational framework in the United States, SE is only beginning to emerge in education research. This is partly as a result of nomenclature issues (SE, EfS, ESD, LfS, EE), making it challenging to identify in the
literature. As an educational construct, its increasing influence in higher education has begun to trickle down into the K-12 educational realm as a result of efforts from such organizations as the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) through its creation of a special study group that focused on Education for Sustainability (Rakow-Bernier, 2011). Currently SE exists mostly in the science-based environmental education research literature and is virtually non-existent in the social studies research domain.

That being said, the five participants in this study though familiar with the ubiquitous concept of sustainability, were not familiar with any educational framework associated with it. The first two study questions: How do social studies teachers conceptualize the goals of social studies education? and How was social studies practiced within their classrooms?, were addressed in the first phase of the analysis process. In order to address the third study question: What do social studies’ teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices indicate about the potential connections between sustainability and social studies education?, I employed rigorous constant comparative analysis using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1988) of their conceptualizations and classroom practices using the emerging sustainability education literature. The findings for this study represent both the participants’ social studies perspectives and practices and the relationship between their perspectives and practices and the emerging framework called Education for Sustainability. By purposefully studying the conceptualizations, beliefs, and practices of these social studies’ teachers who were unfamiliar with sustainability education, I sought to address the existence of an embedded or potential relationship between the two educational frameworks based upon
what they thought about social studies and enacted in their social studies classroom, and finally how their conceptualizations and practices related to the emerging sustainability education literature. By only focusing on social studies conceptualizations and practices, the intent was to allow the data to be analyzed first through a social studies lens, thereby not placing sustainability concepts and principles within the data. Instead, the goal was to allow them to emerge or not emerge through the intensive data analysis process. Quite simply, I wanted to see what the participants did in their classrooms and hear what they thought about social studies in order to address the possibility of a naturally occurring or embedded relationship between SS and SE. I felt if I used or discussed the sustainability education concepts and principles with the teachers then they might perhaps respond by trying to make the two relate or fit together or push back against the potential relationship. This in itself would provide insightful data and findings however, it was not the pathway that I chose.

The findings that emerged from addressing the first two study questions made up Chapter Four and the third study question findings were presented in Chapter Five. These chapters divided the data/findings into separate yet cumulative pieces or snapshots in an effort to organize the data/findings. The purpose of this final chapter is to reconstruct a more holistic or big picture understanding of the relationship between social studies and sustainability education framework.

What did I learn…

In reconstructing an understanding of the relationship between social studies and the sustainability education framework, I will first briefly explore the findings related to
the first two research questions: *How do social studies teachers conceptualize the goals of social studies education?* and *How was social studies practiced within their classrooms?* As a result of my analysis process, a set of findings emerged that highlight the complex and dynamic connections between what these teachers think about social studies and what they do in their social studies classrooms. The end result is an interactional process constructed and modeled by the teachers and practiced by both the teachers and the students. The first two study questions yielded the following synthesized progression of findings:

A. Social Studies education is a diverse assemblage of complex and connection-making expectations woven together to create a meaningful story of the past, present, and future.

B. Social Studies expectations are threaded throughout purposefully designed classrooms and modeling.

C. Social Studies teachers and students “put it all together” through multi-dimensional relational thinking and application.

**Social studies is…Complex and connection making expectations**

In this study, I assert that social studies educators conceptualize their discipline as an assemblage of complex and connection-making expectations woven together to create a meaningful story of the past, present, and future (Houser & Kuzmic, 2001). Similar to the diverse perspectives discussed throughout the social studies literature regarding the purpose and goals of social studies, these teachers varied their conceptualizations of social studies (Ross, 2006). It was clear from the beginning that the teachers’ perceptions represented the all-inclusiveness and complexity attributed to social studies as a
discipline. Social studies for these participants is a naturally integrated curriculum that closely resembles Parker’s (2005), vision of a: “curriculum approach that purposefully draws together knowledge, perspectives, and methods of inquiry from more than one discipline to develop a more powerful understanding of a central idea, issue, person or event” (pp.452-453). The goals and purposes conceptualized by these social studies educators illustrate a mosaic of perspectives all of which converge upon their desire to enrich their students’ understandings of and relationship to the world around them. The goal of students moving toward becoming connectors holds more emphasis than any specific or type of content and, for some, applying these connections is equally meaningful. These educators all perceive social studies and their respective subjects as connective, essential, and relevant to successfully-navigating the current and future world and the challenges it will bring (Dewey, 1916/1990; Powell, 1996; Houser, 2001).

Through the content of their individual subjects, global studies, civics and government, and global cultures, as well as the introduction and highlighting of controversial issues (Powell, 1996) such as poverty, resource depletion, immigration, human rights and social injustice, both historical and current, the teachers aspired to mediate the transfer of their role as connector to their students.

The expectations that these teachers held were constructed around the goal of the students developing the ability to create their own connections between what they are learning and their lives, community, nation, and the world, and then to apply them to their current and future decision-making. I maintain that connection creating is similar to the concept of relevancy (Cotton, 1996), in that these teachers introduce the content and employ the methods most relevant to their students and their realities, individually and
collectively. Relevancy is just one of the tools used by teachers both to create and mediate students’ connection-making across, space, time, issues, and events. Bert explained how he used relevancy during a lesson about the Cold War by: “picking out the human dynamic that is similar, such as, ‘Have you ever had a rivalry with somebody? You never fought directly but you still kind of battled and competed, how did that happen? How did you fight without fighting?’” In order for their students to become connectors, a variety of habits of the heart and mind are necessary to acquire. For these teachers they included an array of functional or practical skills, critical and creative thinking skills, and socio-emotional skills. Capacity building (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006) is an essential element providing students with the tools they need for connection, meaning making, application as well as to facilitate the development of what I refer to as habits or ways of being. These ways of being are viewed by these social studies teachers as characteristics essential to becoming responsive members of our democratic society, such as being participators, localizers and justice seekers. As Kahne and Westheimer (2006) point out in their work, acquiring the capacity to employ the strategies necessary to create change combined with the interactions and connections with local community members to address real issues within their communities resulted in an increased commitment to civic engagement. While deliberating the design of their world history course, Ernie and Bert began by asking: “What do I want them to know, what do I want them to be able to do and how do I want them be in the world?”
Social studies is …Purposeful classrooms and modeling

This study reveals how social studies teachers’ expectations are threaded and modeled throughout their purposefully designed classrooms. All of these teachers employ what they refer to as end in mind or backward planning (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). This process enables them to construct their classrooms based upon the goals and expectations they perceived as being essential for their students to achieve. There are a number of sources and influences from which their goals and expectations derive, namely the state standards (Boote, 2006; Fickel, 2000), the school’s curriculum (Grant, 1996), students’ interests, as well as their own beliefs (Fickel, 2006; Merryfield, 1998) about what students need to know, what they need to be able to do, and how to be in a locally and globally interconnected world. Taylor and Bert both referred to the state standards and school curriculum as guidelines that identified the destination (the goal) while at the same time enabling them to pursue the pathways they found appropriate for their students.

Their courses and practices are designed to seek and apply feedback (Schon, 1987; Cornett, 1990), balance structure with flexibility (Danielson, 1987), meet the needs of all learners (Fickel, 2000) and, most importantly, create and nurture relationships (Malott & Pruyn, 2006; Sidorkin, 2000). Both informal and formal feedback are regularly sought in order to determine student understanding, future lessons/activities, and to facilitate the development of trust between the teachers and students. Mini-conferences enabled Marie to “touch base” and interact with her students in a one-on-one scenario, thus demonstrating to her students that she was willing to take the time to ensure they were “on track” and to work with them if they were struggling.
It was evident through the observations that in most interactions, such as Marie’s, the teachers modeled the very expectations they had verbalized as being essential. This modeling is another salient component of the connection-making process (Chinn & Barber, 2010) in the social studies classroom. The teachers daily pedagogical methods reinforced the importance of critical inquiry to understand the notion of power both historically and currently (Hanvey, 1976; Houser & Kuzmic, 2001; Malott & Pruyn, 2006) seeking diverse perspectives (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005; Tye, 2003), collaboration (Russell, 2010; Sterling, 2001), and the understanding of self <-> local <-> global interconnectedness.

Through a series of Socratic questions beginning with “How can you make your neighborhood better?” and “How do you change policy?” Ernie engaged students in thinking about their personal responsibility toward their own communities. This line of questioning continued through the state, national and global level and oftentimes back toward the student and their community.

There was a range in the level of planning from an extensively detailed course syllabus to a unit-by-unit layout. Regardless of the detail and scope, all of the teachers were able to demonstrate both structure and flexibility, thus also modeling the recognition and reality of unpredictability.

Social studies is…Putting it all together

This study proposes that social studies teachers and students “put it all together” through multi-dimensional relational-thinking and application. The most significant finding regarding how teachers’ conceptualize and practice social studies is how they
enable their students to activate/utilize complex thinking skills by continuously weaving, relating and interconnecting events, ideas and concepts across space, time and systems, all of which are various dimensions of thinking (Grant, 2001; Potash & Heinbokel, 2011). This process is modeled by the teacher from the moment they step into the social studies classroom and is evident by Marie, Elizabeth, Ernie, Taylor and Bert’s reflections regarding the significance of making connections, seeing history as a never-ending story, and the threading of ideas from the past to the present to the future, etc. Throughout the course of the year, the students in all of the classes were expected to begin the process of interconnecting the multiple dimensions introduced to them and explored by them as the school year progressed. Similar to the existence of a range of design strategies, varied levels of dimensional thinking allow for a multitude of combinations, from simple to dynamic and complex. On a daily basis the teachers and the students, using historical and current events and issues, connected places and systems, to other events or issues. Taylor’s lesson about Agent Orange use during Vietnam had the students discussing the short and long-term effects on the economic, social and environmental systems. She even introduced the Gulf Oil spill as a current tragedy having the students contemplate the current and future effects on the same systems. At the end of the study, Taylor commented on the realization that if they had started making connections and thinking like this earlier in the year then: “by now it would be a habit and they would really be on a roll!” This multi-dimensional thinking was also used as a problem solving/solution-seeking strategy. In three of the five classrooms, the culmination of this exercise in complexity was to apply this process in order to predict future scenarios based on the analysis or to seek solutions to a current problem. The students applied this type of multi-
dimensional thinking through authentic research of a community (their own), state (their own), national and/or global issue. The research was used to create a communication tool such as a research/policy paper and/or authentic presentations using the most recent forms of communication technology, such as iMovies, to real and relevant audiences. Outside educators, community stakeholders, parents, other teachers, and students were invited to be audience members. In Bert and Ernie’s American Government course, the students synthesized their authentic research and presentation experiences and accumulated knowledge to create a policy changing and/or implementing proposal that would only be evaluated if sent directly to the governmental authority responsible for such policies.

This finding leads directly into the discussion related to the third research question in that the concept of multi-dimensional relational thinking converges with one of the main components of sustainability education: systems thinking.

**Interpreting the connections**

The overarching question for this study considered what the relationship between social studies and sustainability education is, therefore, drawing from the first two research questions, the third question asked:

*What do social studies’ teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices indicate about the (potential connections) relationship between sustainability and social studies education?*

Using the analyzed data from the first two questions and the available sustainability education literature, the following three findings emerged and were discussed in detail in
Chapter Five:

D. Sustainability education exists within social studies through explicit and implicit shared-meanings.

E. Deeper convergence between SS and SE exists in curriculum spaces and explicit reactions/reflections. (Spaces range from strategic inclusion of SE, reframing of SS and increasing the complexity of SS)

F. Actualization of this convergence and practice has barriers and hurdles.

I am asserting with these findings the existence of multiple connections, though not always obvious, between SS and SE through the use of the same or similar concepts. There are three existing opportunities or pathways for SE to be infused into SS (1.) through the strategic inclusion of SE concepts, (2.) through the reframing of the SS concepts using an SE lens, and lastly (3.) by increasing the complexity of the SS concepts to reflect the principles of SE. The opportunities occur in what I have described as curriculum “spaces”, places in which the SE concepts, reframing, and complexity gain meaning within the context of the social studies curriculum. As an attempt to clarify I will use the analogy of remodeling a room without having to spend a lot of time and/or money. Most of what is there can already be used such as the floor, walls, ceiling and much of the furniture, though you could swap some of them with other pieces from around the house. Some items can be repurposed such as the old TV/entertainment center can be painted and used as a book or knickknack shelf and others can be moved to another place in the room such as putting the couch along another wall so guests can see out of the window. Lastly, some items will just have to be upgraded such as that old analog television to a flat screen tv/computer monitor or perhaps upgraded to include an interactive family game system that reflects the value you place on your family spending
time together. This relates to how many SE concepts already exist within the SS curriculum and can be used in their current form (using what is already there, such as local/global citizenship), many SE can be placed into spaces within the current social studies curriculum (moving familiar concepts from within SS and other subjects and using them in multiple places in the current SS curriculum, such as environmental/social and local/global impacts), some SS concepts can be reframed (repurposed) to align more closely with SE goals (such as moving from predicting the future based on the past, towards using the past and present to envision a new future), and lastly redesigning and reframing current SS goals to address the value of living in a sustainable world and the complex multidimensional relational thinking required to understand and act upon these values.

**Discussion**

**Social Studies develops fundamental complex and dynamic thinking and application skills**

A colleague recently asked the question at a local conference: “What is Social Studies?” After a long pause he proclaimed: “Everything!” This is similar to Marie who stated during her first interview: “I think it’s (SS) all encompassing.” Overwhelming as that might seem, my colleague makes a valid point. Social studies’ examines an extensive scope of topics and issues, across time and space, and systems, thus requiring an interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach. Perhaps more than any other discipline/subject, social studies contributes significantly, though I assert humbly, to the
type of complex-thinking required to make responsible, healthy, sustainability driven
decisions in an increasingly complex and dynamic world. The father of system dynamics,
Jay Forrester, in 1971 recognized the pace of change and declared that the:

…complexity of contemporary social problems had vastly outstripped our
mental capacity to address them … Until we reach a much better
understanding [or, as educators, develop in our students] a much better
public understanding of the [complex and highly interacting] social
systems, attempts to develop corrective programs for social troubles will
continue to be disappointing (as cited in Potash, 2011 p. 2).

I assert that we have yet to develop this interdisciplinary and multidimensional
understanding in our students, and throughout society we frequently only focus on the
discipline or dimension through which we identify the problem. An example would be:
US students falling behind in test scores; as the same dimension to be focused upon to
solve or manage it, which in this case would be to create curriculum to address low test
scores. This one-dimensional problem solving perspective fails to recognize the other
influences affecting test scores, such as low socio-economic status, individual
emotional/psychological factors, environmental (home, school, etc) factors, cultural
factors, and so on… This failing to explore the relationships between and among other
dimensions or disciplines in creating alternative solutions, such as the economic, social
and environmental causes and effects including, socio-economic and consumptive value
systems.

The findings in this study illustrate what I refer to as multidimensional relational
thinking and behaviors that occurs in social studies classrooms. This thinking and
behavior occurs as a result of weaving and mediating connections between and among
the expectations, content, classroom design and practices on the part of the social studies teacher. The culmination of daily interactions, reinforcement, repetition, practice, and application, all to varying degrees depending on the teacher, the content, and method has yet to be explored. My findings suggest the existence of increasingly complex and dynamic thinking opportunities and practices within the SS classroom and curriculum. They confirm and extend a variety of assertions advocated for by social studies researchers and educators (Houser, 2001, 2005; Gruenewald, 2003; Hanvey, 1976; Selby, 2000; Myers, 2010; Kenreich, 2010; Gaudelli; 2010).

Critical thinking – Yes, but…

The findings of this study identify the importance and mediation of critical thinking skills, such as reasoning, thinking about thinking, questioning assumptions, critical reflection, and using questions to look deeper into a topic or issue to uncover what lies below the surface, in addition to seeking alternative ways of viewing a situation. Developing critically thinking citizens who have the ability to dig deeper beneath an issue whether its context is historical or current has always been considered a valuable skill, however as one of the participants, Bert, pointed out:

We’re not telling them exactly what to think, we’re trying to teach them how to think because they’re going to be facing situations which we don’t know about… it’s those critical thinking skills that we’re most concerned about. (my emphasis)

In other words, we don’t know what we don’t know or what we will need to know. The acquisition and the opportunity to practice complex critical and creative thinking skills will provide future global citizens with the flexibility and tools to create solutions to both
known and yet unknown complex issues that they will be facing (Potash & Heinbokel, 2011; Case, 2007; Houser, Thornton, 2005; P21, 2009). These findings also suggest that the teachers recognize the importance of becoming technologically proficient, and likewise, they shared concern over their students’ lack of discernment regarding technology. This indicates a shared goal of both technological-literacy and appraisal, which includes knowledge, competency, and critical reflection of use (Clifford, 2009; Harper; 2009; P21, 2009).

Creative thinking – Yes, and …

These findings also affirm that creative thinking skills such as open-mindedness, seeking and recognizing multiple perspectives, brainstorming, and flexibility encourage students’ to imagine, create and consider alternative and desired outcomes to the unique issues and opportunities brought about through the complex interconnections of our globalized world (Potash & Heinbokel, 2011; Case, 2007; Houser, Thornton, 2005; P21, 2009). This type of thinking was reflected in assessment projects requiring students to predict the future, using events and perspectives of the past and the present, including their own as well as the inclusion of outside speakers, primary sources and the goal, as Elizabeth offered, to nurture in their student’s: “a mind that’s willing to learn new things, try new things, accept new things that are different than themselves.” This ability to shift paradigms and be open to possibilities never before considered (Cloud, 2009) will prove to be essential with the fast-paced change we are already experiencing.

These findings indicate that the skills and the teachers’ deliberate process in mediating students to link issues, events and ideas across time, space, and systems is a
form of complex and dynamic thinking, with teachers first modeling connecting then scaffolding the connections that lead to the goal of students making their own complex connections. The teachers in this study demonstrated this process by starting with employing relevancy (to students’ lives) as a fundamental connection-making tool (both conceptually and in practice), then progressing through early/simpler complex linking, such as across time or space, they eventually examined various system/forces (economic, social, environmental, cultural/war, migration, weather) across either space and/or time. (Figure 6.1) Such a strategy enabled their students to relate and consider multiple events, perspectives and systems/forces across space and/or time, thus providing a holistic or big picture perspective of the past and present world. These types of connective, creative, and critical thinking practices are important to the development of complex and dynamic thinking (Sweeney, 2001; Cloud, 2009; McKeown, 2002).
Multidimensional relational thinking leads to students connecting…

Time* – past, present, future
Space/Place* – geographic, here, there, local, global
Systems* – economic, social, environmental, cultural, political
Ideas, events, perspectives, issues* – democracy, freedom, revolution, energy, war, inventions, human rights, justice, cross-cultural, gender, age, lenses, etc..

Figure 6.1 Multidimensional relational thinking in social studies

What is complex and dynamic thinking? Often referred to as systems thinking (Potash & Heinbokel, 2011; Senge, 2000) it is defined as the: “ability to understand (and sometimes to predict) interactions and relationships in complex, dynamic systems: the kinds of systems we (educators and students) are surrounded by and embedded in” (Senge et al. 2000, p. 239). The teachers in this study all shared that though they were teaching a specific social studies’ course, such as Global History or Civics, yet they
integrated a variety of disciplines throughout their daily lessons and courses, including geography, economics, political science, business, environmental science, sociology, math, statistics, etc. (Ross, 2006; Sherren, 2005; McKeown & Hopkins, 2007; Evans, 2004). The contribution and inclusion of each of these disciplines and many others supports the perspective that they are all essential components that contribute to the building of a larger reality or the *big picture*.

Potash and Heinbokel (2011) envision a conceptual framework tool using the multidimensional perspectives required to address topics and issues of interest to social studies. This framework: “hinges on the interplay between (1) dynamically changing populations (local, regional, national, or global in scale) and (2) resources as mediated through (3) beliefs, perceptions and attitudes” (p.3). A feedback map provides a visualization of the interconnections between the four social disciplines found to be foundational to the purpose of social studies. (Figure 6.2) Their map allows for the exploration of complex and dynamic processes that extend beyond a single factor or event:
As in the case of Taylor’s classroom exercise that examined the effects of Agent Orange use during the Vietnam War by asking such questions as: “Did the use of this chemical agent only impact the results/length of the war? What social, economic, cultural, political attitudes were affected? Were the impacts confined only to the Vietnamese people?” Examining these and other questions that address change over time as well as geographic space, social studies becomes an active process of defining then connecting and identifying various systems and sub-systems. The goal of employing such a map, according to Potash and Heinbokel (2011) is to: “help learn about the critical dynamic interactions that drive the events and processes that comprise the social studies curriculum, and to help apply the learning from these systemic relationships to leverage complex issues or problems” (p. 1). The multidimensional relational-thinking enacted by both teachers and students in the social studies classroom in this study reinforces the
fundamental civic mission of social studies as put forth by the NCSS (1992); to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. This process aligns closely with a systems-thinking approach, which as described by Sweeney (2001), also expands our understanding of the complex world through:

(a) seeing the world around us in terms of wholes, rather than single events, (b) seeing and sensing how the parts of systems work together, rather than a set of unrelated pieces, (c) understanding that life is always moving and changing, never static, (d) understanding how one event can influence another, even if the second event occurs a long time after the first and far away from the first, (e) knowing that what we see happening around depends on our place in the system, where we are now, (f) challenging our own assumptions about how the world works, and becoming aware of how they limit us, (g) thinking about both the long-term and the short-term impact of our and others’ actions and finally (h) asking probing questions when we don’t understand what is occurring or when things don’t turn out the way we planned (p. 1-2).

The findings in this study show that threaded throughout the social studies teachers’ narratives and practices are concepts and processes that reflect systems thinking. These include the conceptualizations about social studies such as Elizabeth’s description: “you’re weaving everything together (in social studies)” and then in “his-ssstory, the story and then we’ll weave in the economic, the geography, the political systems and whatever else that goes along with it.” They also include social studies practices such as Ernie’s discussion with a student about gender equity and women’s participation in the political arena, from a historical and current, local and
cross-cultural perspective. The teachers wove and connected or mediated the students’
toward connecting multiple topics across space and time.

**Social Studies is/as a viable pathway for creating a sustainable future through**

**Civic Sustainability Thinking**

The findings in this study indicate that social studies education has the potential to
address the crucially-important responsibility of what Hanvey (1976) might re-
conceptualize as, understanding the *global dynamics* at work contributing to the current
the *state of the planet* that are in need of close examination and understanding by all of its
inhabitants. The dependence on a depleting supply of nonrenewable resources, extreme
and persistent poverty, lack of satisfaction and well-being, widespread violations of
human rights, climate change, pollution, and many yet unknown concerns mostly
stemming from the effects of economic, technological, and cultural globalization are just
a few of the local and global issues young people are facing today and in the future. As a
result, in almost all realms of education there has been a re-conceptualization of how we
perceive the world we live in, how we learn about it, and how we are to educate future
citizens to live sustainably in the world (Selby & Pike, 2007; Gaudelli, 2004; Merryfield,
2001; Parker, 2004; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2003; McKeown & Hopkins, 2007). New
educational approaches are being called upon to examine how we view the
interconnectedness of the world, how we critically-assess past and current issues as well
as manage emerging issues, and most importantly how we determine what actions need to
be taken to ensure a sustainable present and future world. This study’s examination of the
relationship between a long standing educational paradigm, social studies education, and
a new approach for addressing the increasingly-complex and interconnected issues that we face, education for sustainability, is an effort to contribute to this call. New goals are being established addressing the preparation of students and their ability to be: technologically, locally, globally, economically, socially and environmentally competent (Myers, 2006; UNESCO, 2002; Huckle, 2005; Merryfield, 2004).

The findings in this study identify habits of the heart, mind, and being that are conceptualized, modeled, and mediated by these social studies educators, such as functional, critical, and creative thinking skills, multidimensional relational thinking, justice seeking and action taking, and localizing and globalizing worldviews. These competencies are essential in order to effectively and successfully survive in this increasingly dynamic, complex, and interconnected world (Sterling, 2001; Huckle, 2007; Cloud, 2009; Wheeler & Bijur, 2000).

An approach to addressing these new goals and essential competencies is Educating for Sustainability/Sustainability Education, which calls for a positive vision and committed engagement towards building a sustainable society based on three critical issues: economic viability, environmental health and social equity (McKeown, 2002; Disinger, 1990). The following definition synthesizes my own perspective with the Earth Charter (2000) and two prominent sustainability education scholars: John Huckle (2004) and Jack Byrne (2000). I believe that it embodies the essential principles and clarifies its goals and objectives:

Education for sustainability seeks to develop informed, reflective and action taking citizens who are able to balance their rights to a clean, safe and fulfilling environment with their responsibilities to present and future
generations and to other species. Such citizens should have a theoretical and practical understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens across a number of domains (economic, political, cultural, environmental) at all scales from the local to the global (local/community, national, global) as well as recognition and understanding of the importance of the interconnectedness of these systems. To be mindful of and have respect for diverse points of view and interpretations of complex issues from (cross and multi) cultural (racial, religious, ethnic), regional and intergenerational perspectives. To care for the community of life through the building and strengthening of democratic societies which seek social, economic and environmental justice for all. (EC, 2000; Huckle, 2000; Byrne, 2004)

The findings in this study highlight the existence of many EfS principles and concepts within the expectations, content, methods, and interactions associated with social studies thinking and practice. It is important to reiterate that currently they are not framed as sustainability education principles, concepts or objectives within the teachers’ curriculum or individual unit/lesson plans. The points or places where SS and SE converge lie implicitly within the conceptualized skills, perspectives, ways of being, shared meanings, and the instructional strategies employed to achieve them. The rigorous and constant review of the literature (Glaser, 1988) increased my theoretical sensitivity and enabled me to identify these points of convergence. In a similar fashion, the curriculum spaces and/or opportunities for infusion of specific SE concepts/principles, the reframing and/or the increasing the levels of complexity of SS concepts/principles were determined.
The findings indicate multiple overlaps of concepts and methods that share the same or similar meanings and purpose in both SS and SE constructs. Teachers either conceptualized during the interviews or used all or some of the following in their classroom lessons: local and global citizenship; rights and responsibilities; interconnectedness; looking at the big picture; democratic values and principles; action taking or becoming agents of change/change agents; using multiple perspectives from (multi and cross) cultural, ethnic, religious, local, national, global and socioeconomic levels; social justice and social injustice; service to your community; community interaction; global perspective; authentic application; sensitivity to multicultural and/or lack of multicultural classroom composition of students all of which can and will be linked with the appropriate social studies and sustainability education literature. Concerns over the depth of the teachers’ understandings of particular concepts such as social justice and experiential learning were evident and will require future examination.

I assert that the findings regarding the existence of complex and dynamic multidimensional relational thinking and application and its similarities to systems thinking is the most compelling convergence between social studies and sustainability education. The civic mission of social studies education and, based upon my findings, the development of complex multidimensional relational thinking married with the multiple areas of convergence with sustainability education, creates the potential for social studies to engage in developing civic sustainability thinkers and practitioners.
Implications

Social Studies

This study contributes to the larger discussions regarding both the survival and purpose of social studies within the field of education. The push to integrate social studies into the reading curriculum in early grade levels in order to focus on literacy and math has been perceived as marginalizing the development of mindful and active citizens (Heafner & Groce, 2007; McGuire, 2007; NCSS 2009). I argue infusing education for sustainability goals and principles with an emphasis on developing critical and creative system thinking skills within social studies (Potash & Heinbokel, 2011) will facilitate and enrich the development of higher level thinking skills, civic literacy, global awareness, economic literacy, health literacy, environmental literacy, creative and critical thinking (reasoning, systems thinking, decision-making), solution seeking (problem solving), action taking, communication and collaboration, information/media/technology literacy, functional (life and career) skills, flexibility and adaptability, self-direction, social and cross-cultural, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility skills all articulated as 21st century themes in the Framework for 21st Century Learning (P21, 2009; NCSS, 2009). The relatively recent prevalence of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) (WCER, 2009) focused schools and a lesser-known but equally-relevant version of STEM [sustainability transdisciplinary education model] (Clark & Button, 2009), within existing school structures, rely on the promotion of sustainability principles through the social sciences as a core element to their school environment and curricular framework (Resnick, 2010). Thus, the persistent resilience of social studies
may once again enable it to demonstrate its relevance and crucial purpose in the education of young people by extending its mission to include *Civic Sustainability Thinking* ensuring the acquisition of the understandings, intellectual processes and democratic dispositions necessary to become informed, responsible, action-oriented, and sustainably-minded citizens of a culturally-diverse democratic society in an interdependent world.

**Students**

For students, the implications of civic sustainability thinking gained through social studies education can be applied to all aspects of their lives, personal and occupational/professional. All of the previously discussed knowledge, skills, and dispositions are applicable to daily decision making, short and long term lifestyle and general planning, ethical and moral development, the passing on of sustainability values to their future children, and economic resourcefulness through sustainable consumption choices. Young people are: “naturally systems thinkers” (Sweeney, 2001, p. 2; Benson, 2007), thus nurturing this type of thinking rather than the current fracturing through the mechanistic academic disciplinary/curriculum structure in traditional schooling, would strengthen their ability to become lifelong learners in *all* areas. In addition, with a strong social studies curriculum, they develop into what Richmond (2002) coined as: “systems citizens, who are being the changes they wish to create in the world” (Soderquist, 2003). Early on, these children are capable of considering themselves as members of the global community. In addition, they have the capacity and capability to make positive, informed decisions to face the issues confronting them throughout their entire lives (Benson, 2007).
The inclusion of their voices and perspectives into how they perceive the world now and envision the future is essential, since it is the world they will inhabit and will one day be leaving behind for their future generations. Gayford (2009), in a recent longitudinal study examining students’ perspectives regarding learning for sustainability, shared the students’ insights regarding how it could be enhanced in their schools. Students recognize the value of learning for sustainability and desire that schools “make it clear” (Gayford, 2009, p. 3) within the structure of their entire curriculum, school environment and the school’s educational mission. This can be accomplished through all-inclusive sustainability driven projects, events, and eco-councils. Most importantly, effectively communicating their sustainability learning and actions throughout the school and between the school and the whole community, thus giving the students’ a far-reaching voice to express their visions and concerns (Gaylord, 2009). When asked, the students appear to be very willing to share and express their wants and needs regarding the future in which they very much desire to be an active participant. Providing students with the tools and facilitating the development of civic sustainability thinking and practices within the context of social studies education will enable them to be the change they want to see in the world.

Teachers

What does the development of civic sustainability thinkers mean for social studies educators? As gatekeepers (Thornton, 1991) and professionals, teachers are central to the content and instructional decision-making enacted within their classrooms. Yet, how they conceptualize their own “personal entourage” of beliefs, values, etc., and their students’
interests and concerns are also significant factors (Powell, 1996; Merryfield, 1998; Elay, 2006; Fickel, 2006). I contend that teachers who become familiar with and understand the concept of sustainability and the principles within the sustainability education framework are likely to be more interested, willing and able to include it in their current social studies curriculum. Understandably, of concern to so many teachers is the prospect of additional content and/or standards. Therefore, the key is to bring to the surface the embedded principles within their current curriculum and daily lessons that are conducive to developing Civic Sustainability Thinking. Thus, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and tools to see the spaces and/or opportunities within their own curriculum and enabling them to infuse/integrate various themes, concepts and/or methods of sustainability education based upon content, relevancy as well as students’ needs and interests. The need to dramatically-change all aspects of their current curriculum may not be necessary. Rather, making visible what may already be there and facilitating educators to bring it all together may be the most viable approach. All of this can be accomplished by applying the strengths model and tapping in to and reframing what educators are already doing in their individual classrooms and schools to mediate the development of sustainability-minded students could be expanded and shared in a more timely and cost effective manner (McKeown, 2002).

Professional Development and Teacher Education

Many educators have and will continue to seek out and gather knowledge and instructional resources on their own in order to keep up with current educational trends, student interests, or their own personal growth (Moallen, 1994; Danielson, 2008).
However, the reality and two of the major challenges to any academic reform are time and finances, or lack thereof. These findings allow for the consideration of tapping into and expanding upon what educators are already conceptualizing and practicing in their individual classrooms in a more timely and cost effective manner (McKeown, 2002; UNESCO, 2005).

Sustainability Education in teacher education is virtually non-existent in the US, though internationally a number of countries include it in their programs (Fien & Maclean, 2000). That being said, in the state of Washington in 2007, the Professional Educator Standards Board created a standard stating that teacher preparation programs were to provide evidence that their teacher candidates: “are able to prepare K–12 students to be responsible citizens for an environmentally-sustainable, globally interconnected, and diverse society…and will be expected to consider student learning in the context of social, political, environmental, and economic systems” (Nolet, 2009). This relatively-recent occurrence demonstrates some movement in the direction of recognizing Sustainability Education’s inclusion into mainstream educational pathways.

**Further research**

There are a number of potential options for research that would refine, challenge, and extend the exploration of civic sustainability thinking and practices in social studies as a pathway for sustainability education as well as for education for sustainability in general. Additional research, such as a needs-assessment, examining the conceptualizations and instructional practices of social studies educators would provide a clearer picture regarding what teachers know and what they need to know in order to
infuse and implement sustainability education within current curricular frameworks. Evaluating the conceptualizations and practices of educators, social studies, and others, who identify themselves and/or have been identified as exhibitors of best practices sustainability education practitioners, would provide insights into the who and how of current SE/EfS efforts. Programs and schools that have been practicing SE/EfS over the past couple of years can also be evaluated along with their student outcomes to determine whether their models have achieved the goals they set out to achieve.

Research into specific approaches such as systems thinking and system dynamics, and their educational effectiveness and how they could be used in a social studies/science context would provide additional entry points for inclusion of sustainability education. Lastly, focusing research upon both pre-service and in-service teacher training specific to the needs of social studies educators called upon to take on a more transformative role in educating future globally-minded citizens (Banks, 1995; Gaudelli & Fernekes, 2004) via a sustainability education framework.

Conclusion

**Evaluative criteria**

As I look back upon this research experience and reflect upon what I have learned and how it has or has not been manifested in the outcome, I am also visualizing how it may appear to my readers. I realize my intense and lengthy immersion in this process enables it all to make sense to me. My intent was to explore a topic that was new to me
and to others both within and outside of my discipline. By employing grounded theory methodology I strove to emulate the process described by Charmaz (2006), by:

- taking comparisons from data and reaching up to construct abstractions and simultaneously reaching down to tie these abstractions to data…learning about the specific and the general and seeing what is new in them—then exploring their links to larger issues or previously unexplored issues (p. 181).

My ultimate goal is to make a valid contribution to both the social studies and sustainability education literature, initiate further research in both and reach out to current social studies educators to help them to realize the significance and complexity of what they are already doing and how they can enrich it even further in order to meet the connection-making expectations that they have set for themselves and their students.

There are several criteria used to evaluate qualitative and grounded theory research. At the onset of this study I chose to focus on the four evaluative criteria for constant comparative inquiry suggested by Charmaz (2006). These include: credibility/trustworthiness, originality, resonance and usefulness.

Credibility or trustworthiness as the qualitative expression for validity is the foundational piece to qualitative research (Butler-Kisber, 1990) and my process to meet it included: transparency in my methods, situatedness, and consistent reflective processes. Through multiple (re)analyses and data/literature reviews, I employed systematic comparisons between observations and categories, thus becoming very familiar with the topic. An earnest effort was made to link the data to my analysis, findings, and arguments identifying the connections and subsequent relationship between social studies and
sustainability education through the complex and dynamic multidimensional relational thinking processes shared by both, as well as numerous explicit and implicit shared meanings.

The criterion of originality was met through the new conceptual and insightful renderings of the processes occurring in the social studies teacher’s conceptualizations and social studies classroom practices. In addition, the exploration of a deeper level of critical and complex thinking and its potential for contributing to the creation of sustainably-minded citizens who will have the capacity and understanding to make decisions and actively participate in building a sustainable world. I believe my work both refines and extends current ideas, concepts, and practices in both social studies and sustainability education.

Resonance has been partially met through the anecdotal, yet positive reactions from my peers, some of the participants as well as others connected with social studies and sustainability education. Through informal discussions with a variety of people, there seems to be an understanding of the interpretation and presentation of my findings. Of course the true indication of this criterion being met will occur upon the review from my dissertation committee members.

The usefulness of this study have yet to be realized, though I can confidently assert that it is my intent that this analysis provides interpretations that educators and researchers can use. I also believe this work contributes to: “making a better world” (p. 183), by establishing a sound argument for pursuing further inquiry and the consideration of its inclusion into professional development and teacher education training as well as current social studies practices. By establishing another viable pathway for the principles
of educating for sustainability to be enacted, it further increases the knowledge and
capacity of our current and future students to work locally and globally toward creating
more socially, economically, and environmentally just and sustainable communities
throughout the world.

**Concluding thought…**

And so… I believe education and social studies in particular needs to reflect upon
continuing its evolution toward embracing a deeper, more holistic understanding of the
concepts of interconnectedness and synergy by envisioning the education of all through
an ecological thinking lens…
References


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APPENDIX A:

IRB APPROVAL LETTER
March 24, 2010

Protocol Number: 2010E0160
Protocol Title: SOCIAL STUDIES AND SUSTAINABILITY. IS THERE A CONNECTION?, BINAYA SUBEDI, BETHANY VOSBURG-BLUEM, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN ECOCLOGY
Type of Review: Request for Exempt Determination

Dear Dr. Subedi,

The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced protocol exempt from IRB review.

Date of Exempt Determination: 1, 2
Qualifying Exemption Category: 3/18/2010

Please note the following:

- Only OSU employees and students who have completed CITI training and are named on the signature page of the application are approved as OSU Investigators in conducting this study.
- No changes may be made in exempt research (e.g., personnel, recruitment procedures, advertisements, instruments, etc.). If changes are needed, a new application must be submitted.
- Per university requirements, all research-related records (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least three years after the research has ended.
- It is the responsibility of the investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University's OHEP Federalwide Assurance #00005378. All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the ORRP staff contact listed below with any questions or concerns.

Cheri Petey, MA, Certified IRB Professional
Senior Protocol Analyst—Exempt Research
Office of Responsible Research Practices
Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210
phone: 614.688.6359
fax: 614.688.0366
e-mail: peteyc6@osu.edu

Exempt Determination
Version 11
APPENDIX B:

PARTICIPANT IDENTIFICATION LETTER [SNOWBALL]
Hi [Name]

I hope this note finds you and your family doing well.

I wonder if you may know of any social studies teachers in the greater Columbus area who may be able to help me with my research. Knowing you have met a number of teachers through the OSU PDS over the years I was hoping you may be able to refer one of two of them.

I am basically looking for a social studies educator in a 7-12 setting who you might describe as a "global educator". Though my area is sustainability education, as you can imagine no one knows what this is or what it involves, however, I have found that many who fit the "global educator" description often tend to be more inclined to include sustainability issues, such as, environmental issues, human rights, the world as a system, the interconnectedness (economic, social and/or environmental) among issues. Maybe even those who use place-based education and/or community/service learning. I am looking for the "lone" social studies educator as opposed to one who may be involved with a "team" in a team teaching context.

I have already communicated with Steve Shapiro and he suggested someone who was perfect! Unfortunately for me, Dr. Merryfield has since asked him to assist her in developing a "global school" at Metro, for which he will be perfect.

If you have any suggestions, either for participants or someone else to ask, please let me know.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Take care and have a Merry Christmas!
Bethany
APPENDIX C:

SAMPLE LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
Hello [Name],

March 3, 2010

My name is Bethany Vosburg-Bluem and I am a graduate student researcher from OSU. I am studying Social Studies and Global Education in the Ohio State University School of Teaching and Learning.

I am contacting you to request your support in conducting a research study involving one of your social studies teachers. Through a referral system of curriculum directors, university professors, and social studies' department heads, one of your teachers was recommended as a potential candidate for participation in my research study. With your support I would like to work specifically with [teacher’s name] for this study.

The purpose of this study will be to identify the potentially embedded elements and principles of sustainability education within the social studies classroom. Through grounded theory and co-operative action research (the second method is optional based upon the participants interest in becoming more involved), the study will examine how the social studies' curriculum and classroom have been embedded within their frameworks and practices, the principles of sustainability. Also of focus will be how social studies teachers conceptualize, plan and carry out these principles, often unknowingly, through their understanding of the goals and purpose of social studies as an academic discipline. To date, there has been virtually no research done on this topic, and I feel with the global issues we are facing in this 21st century, this topic is worthy and very essential to explore.

The benefits this educator and your school will receive from participating in this study, include the opportunity to contribute to a new an increasingly relevant body of educational research as well as the oft cited benefits of reflecting upon one’s teaching practices. The potential for the subsequent transformative impact of these reflections will be shared with her students, colleagues, school and community through potential changes in her strategies and decision-making.

There is little to no risk posed to your teacher. The extent of participation will include interviews, classroom observations followed up by brief discussions for clarity and access to teaching materials for content analysis. I will have selected (name of teacher) based upon the fact that (he/she) is a social studies educator and (he/she) exhibits a “global scope” to (his/her) educational practices beyond the stated subjects they (she/he) teaches.

In order to ensure confidentiality and to protect the identity on all collected and reported data, the teacher will be able to select a pseudonym and I will assign one for your school. As I stated before, her participation is completely voluntary and she may refuse to answer any questions that she does not wish to answer as well as withdraw at any time without penalty or repercussion.

A letter of your support, along with other research protocol will be submitted to the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and upon their approval I will be ready to begin collecting data. I would like to begin this research at the beginning of the fourth quarter. I sincerely hope you are supportive of my interest in conducting this research at [Teacher’s name] and I look forward to working with [teacher’s name] and your school.

I know you are very busy with the many responsibilities of administrating your school, therefore, for your convenience I have enclosed a sample letter you may find beneficial. If you are comfortable with this letter please print it out on the official district letterhead and sign where stated. If you would like to make any changes please feel free to do so and notify me when the letter is ready to be picked up.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and would like to stop by and discuss this in person some time in the near future as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Bethany Vosburg-Bluem (937) 344-3979
Doctoral Candidate and GTA - University Supervisor Social Studies and Global Education
The Ohio State University, 1945 N High Street 333 Arts Hall
College of Education & Human Ecology, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1120

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APPENDIX D:

DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM TEMPLATE
Name or Type of document: _________________________________________

Document ID: ____________ Date Received: ____________ Date of Document: ____________

What was the document associated with? (lesson, project, class reading) ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page #</th>
<th>Key Words/Concepts</th>
<th>Relationship to Research Questions</th>
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Summary of Contents: _________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Significance or Purpose of Document: _________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Describe contradictory elements of this document (if any): ________________________________

Questions/Issues/Reflections to consider: ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX E:

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Social Studies and Sustainability – Is there a Connection?

Researchers: Dr. Binaya Subedi and Bethany Vosburg-Bluem

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to discover if the themes underlying the widespread concept of sustainability are naturally embedded within the conceptualization of social studies and within the social studies curriculum and materials chosen by you the teacher.

Procedures/Tasks:
This study will consist of interviews conducted before, at least once mid-way and at the end of data collection. Each interview will last no longer than an hour and will be scheduled for your convenience. Classroom observations will be conducted on a weekly basis, sometimes more than once a week pending type of lesson being conducted. During non-instructional time between classes, lunch,
after school, I would like to complete stimulated recall discussions with you after the observations to better understand the lessons. These can also be accomplished via email/phone if we are unable to meet after the observation. The interviews and discussions will be digitally audio-taped in order to ensure accurate data collection. The analysis of the collected data will be ongoing and constantly being compared to the new data collected. Periodic member checks will be conducted to ensure you are comfortable with the representation of yourself in the transcribed data, you will also have the opportunity to “see” and discuss the themes/codes further in to the data collection. The depth of the review of the above data analysis will be up to you and what you are interested in examining.

**Duration:**
Specifically, this case study will include a total of at least 30 hours of classroom observations during the regular school day, and no more than 4 hours of audio-taped recall discussions during non-instructional time. Unless otherwise requested as explained above. The study will conclude by June 9, 2010.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

**Risks and Benefits:**
I believe there are several benefits of participating in my study. Your participation in the study may help you think about the importance of sustainability principles in the social studies curriculum and the classroom as well as its implications for yourself and students. We think that you will have an opportunity to inform leaders in the class, school, district, and other educational systems about how social studies are being constructed in the classroom.

While we believe your participation involves minimal risk, you might become embarrassed, upset, or uncomfortable by something you say that is then recorded on the audiotape. You might also experience unforeseen stress in time commitment and scheduling of data collection. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, please discuss your feeling with the researcher.

**Confidentiality:**
Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following group (as applicable to the research):
Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;

**Incentives:**
There are no incentives included in this research study. I will share the results of the analysis with you and your students.

**Participant Rights:**

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or if you feel you have been harmed by participation, you may contact **Bethany Vosburg-Bluem at 937-344-3979** (or email at vosburg-bluem@buckeyemail.osu.edu).

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact **Bethany Vosburg-Bluem at 937-344-3979**.

**Signing the consent form**

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of subject</th>
<th>Signature of subject</th>
<th>AM/PM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Date and time</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)</th>
<th>Signature of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)</th>
<th>AM/PM</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Date and time</td>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship to the subject</th>
<th>AM/PM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Date and time</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of person obtaining consent</th>
<th>Signature of person obtaining consent</th>
<th>AM/PM</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Date and time</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX F:

INFORMAL LETTER TO PARTICIPANT FOR PARTICIPATION
Hello ----------,

I am writing this email to request your participation in a research study that I/we will be conducting this spring from the beginning of April until the end of the school year.

As you may already be aware, I am a PhD graduate student at Ohio State University in the School of Teaching and Learning and my area of study is Social Studies and Global Education.

In my study I will be examining the relationship between social studies and the emerging and increasingly prevalent concept of sustainability. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will require minimal additional time outside of your classroom and/or school day. The methods I will use to collect data will include:

Interviews – No more than one hour each, four total. (Pre, 2 mid, post)
Classroom observations – Approximately four hours per week.
Recall discussions – brief informal discussions to be held following the classroom observations to clarify questions about the data collected
Collection of teaching materials such as: lesson plans, classroom textbook, non-textbook materials/supplementals, curriculum guide/standards, etc.

In order to ensure confidentiality and protect your identity on all collected and reported data, you will be able to select a pseudonym for yourself and I will assign one for your school. As I stated before, your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer as well as withdraw at any time without penalty or repercussion.

Being a fellow social studies’ teacher I completely understand how your schedule is often under tremendous time constraints and I will be very flexible as we work together to schedule the interviews and observations. You will be able to contact me by telephone as well as through email at your convenience. I strive to be very accessible and timely in all of my communications.

Your participation will contribute to a new research area that is just beginning to be explored, yet may be essential to facilitating the formation of new theories which will address the needs of our 21st century students. Also through this experience you may find the opportunity to reflect upon your instructional practices and decision-making, which can be an effect tool for growth as well as rejuvenation.

I am really looking forward to hearing from you as well as the opportunity to work with you. Please let me know by phone (937) 344-3979 or by email (vosburg-bluem.1@buckeyemail.osu.edu) if you would be interested in discussing this further.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Bethany Vosburg-Bluem
APPENDIX G:

UNIT 1: OVERVIEW CIVITAS
MASTERY ASSESSMENT #1 - Civitas Brochure for the “Civitas” Unit

1. WHAT IS THIS?: This unit explores not only the philosophical questions of “What does it mean to be a citizen in our Americans Democracy”, but also examines some of the specific mechanics involved in citizenship. Students will create a “Civitas Brochure” using Microsoft Publishing Documents to create a sort of “Guide to American Citizenship” that will cover the essential content topics and understandings of this unit. This brochure should provide a clear and professional review of the nature of civic participation and specific information necessary for active citizenship, such as voting related-issues and economic choices affecting political outcomes. Think of this brochure as the things that you would want a recently naturalized U.S. Citizen to know in order to be a fully contributing member of our American Democracy.

2. WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?: As we have learned from history, a society falls apart when people stop caring. In order to prepare ourselves to be informed and active citizens, we must explore both the nature of citizenship as well as some of the most essential rules, regulations, and guidelines specific to our American Democracy. Before moving into the more complex nature of the American system of government and how different political groups can influence the system, we must first examine the concept of the individual citizen and some of the key tools we can use in order to participate in our own governing.

3. WHEN IS THIS? (SCHEDULE):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs 3/11</td>
<td>Welcome to this course/Applying ------ culture to the social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri 3/12</td>
<td>“Learning More about Citizenship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce T3-U1-F#1 Skill Builder on American CIVITAS using Microsoft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publishing Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 3/15</td>
<td>“A Historical Context of Citizenship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues 3/16</td>
<td>“Critical American documents in creating CIVITAS”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 3/17</td>
<td>Work on T3-U1-F#1 Skill Builder Using Microsoft Publishing Document IN-CLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs 3/18</td>
<td>“The Language and Rules of Citizenship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. 3/21</td>
<td>T3-U1-F#1 Skill Builder on American CIVITAS DUE SUNDAY MAR. 21ST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foundation #1 (Skill Builder) - T3-U1-F#1 Skill Builder on American CIVITAS (DUE Sun. 3/21)
Foundation #2 (Formative) - T3-U1-F#2 Current Events Article and Students’ online interactive collaboration—mapping our community spirit online (DUE SUNDAY 3/28)
Foundation #3 (Objective) – T3-U4-F#3 Essential Content Quiz (IN-CLASS Wed 3/31)
Foundation #4 (Unit Builder/Mastery Builder) – T3-U1-F#4 Unit Abstract to be completed (IN-CLASS Mon 4/5)

4. Unit 1 Goals:

For Students to demonstrate mastery in the:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content of.</th>
<th>Skills of</th>
<th>Essential Question:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Can I…      | • Critical Thought  
              | (Observation, analysis and questioning, hypothesizing) | What does it really mean to be a citizen—of Ohio, your city, your school and the United States-- with duties, responsibilities, and benefits? |
|            | • Presentation Skills  
              | (Speaking, visual, aesthetics, professional appearance) | |
|            | • Explain CIVITAS, recognize, explain and evaluate examples and patterns of Civitas in my community and country? | |
my citizen's rights and responsibilities helps to keep my community sustainable?
- Identify which historical events, person and documents created a sense of American professional brochure project
- Self-management/ Organization (Project scope and scheduling, managing their time)

MASTERY ASSESSMENT #1 - Civitas Brochure for the “Civitas” Unit
- Connection to the --- STEM Sustainability Project 2009: How can our efforts to become better citizens help our communities to be more sustainable? Presentation of the Mastery brochures, our reflections on our work, and our efforts to help refugees and immigrants in -----------.

6. MASTERY DIRECTIONS

CIVITAS BROCHURE: A Guide on How to Be a Better Citizen
Standard Checklist to be complete by the student BEFORE Mastery Submission
For student to self-assess and consider for Mastery completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard to be addressed:</th>
<th>Have I met the standard at a level acceptable to the teacher by passing a Foundation that addresses the standard on the left?</th>
<th>Consider, but do not answer: Will I use this standard in my Mastery attempt? Why is this piece necessary?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Content, skill, Humboldt Habit or essential understanding)</td>
<td>1 (not acceptable) 2 (meets requirements) 3 (exceeds requirements)</td>
<td>(Student: use a + to indicate if this is a standard that you will use in your Mastery attempt, then write a brief response to its significance.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the student to assess

1. The main idea of this Foundation is that I am supposed to be able to:

(list the objectives here)

2. Was I able to meet these objectives? (If not, what do I need to do next)

RUBRIC: Civitas Brochure for “Citizenship and the American System”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Mastery</th>
<th>Insufficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The essential question was sufficiently answered on each page and conclusively at the end What does it mean to be an American Citizen with duties, responsibilities, and benefits?</td>
<td>-Mastery of Essential Understanding was thoroughly demonstrated with clear and concise analysis. ...</td>
<td>-Demonstration of Essential Understanding was vague and lacked a Mastery level of analysis. ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H

DESIGN A SUSTAINABLE WORLD (DSW) MASTERY UNIT OVERVIEW
This project will push your comfort zone, and sharpen independent research skills that you will need to succeed in college. It is quite possible that no scholar or researcher, at any level, has put the pieces together in the same way as you will be doing. Therefore, your work is authentic, valuable, and worthy of publication. It could possibly be of value to researchers in the future.

You will be presenting in front of city and education officials. Essentially, you will be attempting to persuade an elected official. The last step of the project will be to create legislation and grant requests as advocates to the Ohio and United States governments, during the government class. It’s all real.

III. WHEN IS THIS? (SCHEDULE) - removed

IV. UNIT ESSENTIAL QUESTION AND GOALS

“What are the design challenges in a globalizing world to make it sustainable for all mankind? How can they be addressed and resolved?”

Let’s look at this question more closely: It means—What can we do as a rich, influential nation to help design a better global society that is sustainable for our species and the sustainability of our ecosystem? What can we do as a school? As individuals? What are the challenges inherent in designing such an approach to solving this dilemma? How can we meet and overcome these challenges? To answer this dense, critical question for themselves, students must be able to address:

1. What does it mean for culture to become part of a globalizing world? What is erased, and what is added?
2. How does globalization threaten global peace, stability and economic development?
3. How can the current system of supranational political units (European Union, NAFTA) and global economies and economic institutions (IMF, World Bank) help the world meet the Development Goals? How does it hinder meeting those Goals in other ways?
4. What kinds of collaboration need to be done for more human beings to reach minimum standards of health, personal security, and economic and social opportunity?

For Students to demonstrate mastery in the (INCOMPLETE VERSION)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content of</th>
<th>Skills of</th>
<th>Essential Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Can 1…

1. Explain Globalization as a historical process?
   a. Identify causes of globalization?
   b. Identify effects of globalization?
2. Evaluate and critique cultural globalization as a process both positive and negative?
   a. Explain cultural diffusion and assimilation?
3. Recognize, predict and explain patterns in geographic data and standards of living around the world?
4. Identify supranational bodies as major pushers of globalization?
   a. Critique efforts of major
polical bodies (United Nations, European Union, and MORE) to resolve global issues?

b. Critique efforts of major economic bodies to resolve global issues through free trade and economic globalization (IMF, World Bank, and MORE)?

5. Evaluate what is being done to a) promote and b) protect Human rights and Gender rights around the world?

6. Identify global security and conflicts over territory and resources, explain their causes, and describe how they contribute to making global issues worse?

7. Demonstrate and explain a connection between the human species and deteriorating ecological sustainability?

and economic development?

3. How can the current system of supranational political units hinder meeting those Goals in other ways?

4. What kinds of collaboration need to be done for more human beings to reach minimum standards of health, personal security, and economic and social opportunity?

5. DELETE

V. HOW WILL YOU DO THIS: Project Requirements

Objective: Create a professional product that is clear, streamlined, polished, and demonstrates independent research and Social Science skills and methods, including the scientific method. What might change from student to student is exactly HOW this will be achieved.

MDGoal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (Global Economic Equity)
MDGoal 3: Promote gender equality/empower women (Global Social, Political, and Educational Equity)
MDGoal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability (Ecological and Societal Sustainability)
MDGoal 8: Develop a global partnership for development (Collaboration Between the U.S., Global Institutions, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Part 1: Persuasive Lecture Portion of the Project (3 MINUTES)

This is a summarization of the Project findings. You will use the Rough Draft template to create your lecture.

1. An overview of your research/your abstract. Will contain basic information, data, analysis.
2. Three content topics that affect your Goal—and how they affect your Goal’s success or failure.
3. What is being done NOW to resolve this MDG, and is it enough?
4. Your ideal solution to solve the MDG. How will this realistically happen—summarize your action plan and be sure to include THE FUNDING OF YOUR SOLUTION.
5. How will your action plan make our world a little more sustainable?
6. Finally, what can the audience do to help?
7. What it meant to me to make this project; what I carried away.
IN THREE MINUTES, CAN YOU PERSUADE AN AUDIENCE TO TAKE ACTION AND SAVE A LIFE?

Part II—Visual Exhibition (5 MINUTES)
After the lecture, students will show a digital presentation which will go deeper into the issues and research, and attempt to inform the audience, enlighten them and inspire them to action.
You may choose:

1. &Magig Documentary
2. Podcast with images
3. Multi-genre presentation visual slideshow (PowerPoint or Picasa Web Album with captions which you will explain with prepared note cards)
4. Comic Life with an extended visual metaphor of your MDG
5. Web-based Seminar including Google Docs, Google Maps and/or Picasa Web Albums (possibly a Google website to organize your information) to demonstrate your information

* In all options…
1. Photographs and images should be relevant and appropriate.
2. All images not created by the author MUST be cited ON THE SCREEN!!!!!
3. In displayed information, text should be sparingly used and in your own words.
4. Research should be cited and accompanied by analysis and significance of research. (In other words, we shouldn’t see just a bunch of unconnected facts. We should be seeing strings of information that YOU explain, YOU illustrate, and YOU show why they are important!)
5. NONE of these options may run longer than 5:00 minutes. They will use the requirements that we have set up in previous projects.

RESEARCH FOR YOUR PRESENTATION (LECTURE/EXHIBITION)
Immediately start putting together a Research/Analysis Chart and an Annotated Bibliography (AB). THESE ARE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS AND PART OF YOUR GRADED MATERIALS WITH YOUR LECTURE AND EXHIBITION. These documents are beneficial for future researchers and we have to be responsible for our research…where does it come from? Why did you choose it? Who is the author and what is the original intended purpose?

a. Your Research/Analysis Chart and AB will include more citations than in-text citations used in your lecture and exhibition. (AT LEAST 10 SOURCES)

b. AT THE MINIMUM you must USE 8 pieces of evidence from AT LEAST 4 different, academic sources (NOT Wikipedia. Biased opinion pieces may be used but cannot be used as cited evidence.)

c. AT LEAST ONE perspective from a non-American (international or foreign) academic source

d. AT LEAST ONE academic journal (J-STOR or other recommended databases by your teacher)

e. AT LEAST THREE sources will be annotated (See example on ROUGH DRAFT). MLA style.

i. MLA Style? Learn how to cite ANYTHING AT http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/

ii. RefWorks actually does the citations for you if you are citing academic sources! Many databases, including almost all academic databases, offer the ability to send the particular source you want to cite to your RefWorks account. Click on the following website to setup your RefWorks account: https://www.refworks.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/Refworks/login.asp?WNCLang=false

f. Students choosing to make up late assignments from the World Studies course may use any combination of sources as long as it comes from the list of research sources provided in Unit Overview.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Components</th>
<th>Mastery</th>
<th>Not effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional necessary documents</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Not completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Portions throughout this document (Unit Plan) were left out of this Appendix version. This version is only intended to provide an overview of the DSW project. If you have any questions or would like more information about this project please contact the author of this thesis. Thank you in advance.