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Seeing the World Through Their Eyes: The Impact of Place Attachment on Teachers' Understanding of Worldviews

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SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH THEIR EYES: THE IMPACT OF PLACE ATTACHMENT ON TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF WORLDVIEWS

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Abstract

Over the past 20 years, Long Island, New York, has seen an increase in linguistic and racial diversity within its schools. The growth in linguistic diversity has brought with it an increase in English language learners (ELLs), representing almost a 50% increase since 2012. As the ELL population has grown, so has the achievement gap between ELLs and their non-ELL peers. The current teaching staff on Long Island does not match the diversity of its student population. Prior research has shown that the cultural mismatch between the teachers and students is one contributing factor to the aforementioned achievement gap. In order for educators to understand their students, they must first recognize their own worldview and appreciate that the worldviews of their students may vary greatly from their own. This multimodal hermeneutic phenomenological study examines the influence of place attachment and topophilia on the formation of the worldview of educators who return to their childhood school districts to teach, where the ELL population has grown greatly. The study utilized the combined theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory, place attachment, and topophilia to explore educators' formation and understanding of their own worldviews and those of others. Through three semi-structured interviews, including the exploration of photos and community tours, the participants described how bonds within their school and community shaped who they are today. Using thematic analysis, four themes arose: bonds are created through connections within the community and family; bonds are formed through attachment with the school; bonds are developed through relationships with people; and changes in the school and community present challenges to the sense of identity and home.

Keywords*:* worldview, place attachment, topophilia, sociocultural theory, ELLs

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> Things as they are, no mortal has ever seen…We cannot see things as they are, for we are compelled by a necessity of nature to see things as we are. We can never get rid of ourselves. ("Things as they are," 1831)

As the quote implies, the lens through which we interpret the world is not based on the vision in front of us but rather shaped by our experiences. Two people can be in the exact same place, looking at the exact same thing, and yet process two completely different experiences. This phenomenon is not a result of people's eyes playing tricks on them but because every person has traveled through life on a different path, based on their environment, culture, religion, and family life, among other contributing factors. This affects who they are as human beings. The result is that all people envision spaces and interact in these places in their own manner. This is particularly true among teachers, who unpack their life experiences every day in their classrooms, weaving these experiences in and out of lessons, and impacting how they view and interact with their students. However, as the populations of American schools become more diverse and the teaching staff does not, culture clashes may arise if the differences in how we interpret our world are not understood.

Between the school years of 2000 and 2017, student demographics of American public schools changed dramatically. The White population decreased from 67% to 48%, whereas the Latinx population increased from 16% to 27%. At the same time, the number of English language learners (ELLs) has increased by 1.2 million nationwide. Conversely, despite the changing demographics of school children, the racial profile of educators has only changed slightly. In 2000, 84% of teachers were White, while only 8% were Black and 6% were Latinx. In 2017, 79% of teachers were White, 7% were Black, 9% were Latinx, and 2% were Asian (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). With only marginal shifts in the demographics

of the teachers, as the races and cultures of the American public school population change, questions over teachers' cultural understanding of their students arise.

As Nieto (2017) argued, teachers must be sociocultural mediators, bridging home and school lives in meaningful ways. However, when these bridges are not made, subtractive schooling takes place, which is when the culture and language of students are minimized to supplant their ways of life with that of the dominant culture. Valenzuela (1999) demonstrated that when teachers and students lack cultural understanding of each other, this creates divisions between the students and staff that are often mistaken as a lack of caring. Teachers erroneously believe students do not care about academics, while students interpret the behavior of the teachers as a lack of caring for their pupils. This leads to subtractive schooling where the culture of the home is slowly stripped away and replaced with the culture of the school, often leading to academic failure. When considering the negative impact cultural misunderstandings have on student achievement, looking into measures of academic achievement paints a clearer picture of the effects of demographic differences in school success. One such measure to examine is the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs on both state exams and graduation rates. On Long Island, New York, an increase in the ELL population has led to an enormous achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. The following section examines the changing demographics on Long Island, along with the aforementioned achievement gap.

Changing Demographics on Long Island

The changing demographics in American schools include not only racial diversity but also linguistic heterogeneity. As many suburban schools shift from the monolinguistic population of the past to the current multilingual institutions, an abundance of challenges arises. In the seven-year period between the 2012-2013 school year and 2019-2020 school year, the total

public school population on Long Island declined by more than 20,000 students, representing a 4.5% decrease. Conversely, the ELL population in Long Island public schools grew by 13,423 students, representing a 48.7% increase, of which 86.3% are Hispanic or Latino. The rise in the ELL population on Long Island mirrors the increase in the Hispanic or Latino population, which has risen by 40.5% over the same time period (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2020).

Although the demographics of the student population are changing, the demographics of educators remain mostly homogeneous. On Long Island, while 91% of teachers are White, only 50% of the students are White (NYSED, December 2019). Unfortunately, New York State does not keep data on the linguistic backgrounds of teachers. Therefore, it is impossible to know how many teachers speak the languages reflected in the homes of their students.

Achievement Gap

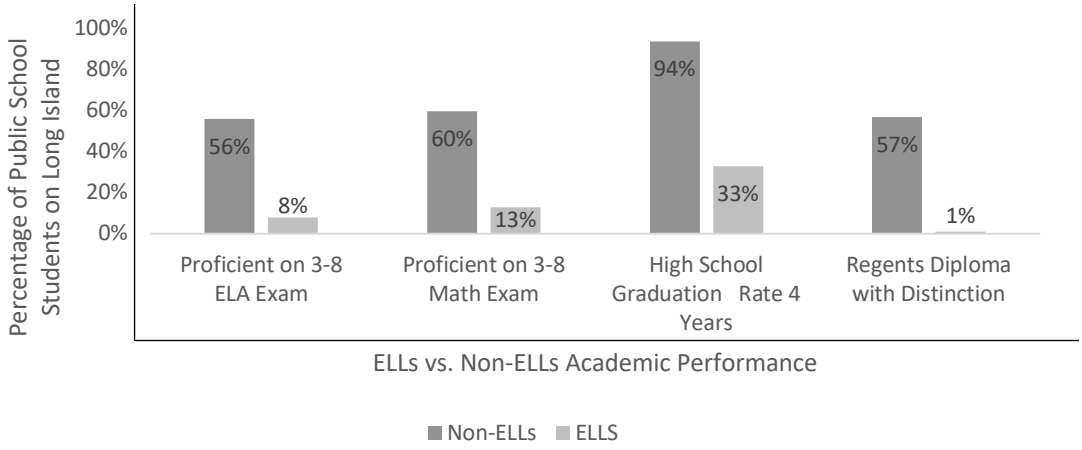
One result of the changing linguistic backgrounds of the student body is that the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs is tremendous. For example, in 2019,[1] while 63% and 48% of non-ELLs in grades 3 through 8 in Nassau and Suffolk County, respectively, were considered proficient on the state English Language Arts exam (ELA), only 11% and 6% of ELLs reached that same level of achievement. The results for the mathematics exam were not much better even though translated versions were available. ELLs in grades 3 through 8 in Nassau County only had an 18% proficiency rate, while ELLs in Suffolk had a dismal 10% proficiency rate. This was compared to 67% and 50% proficiency rates of non-ELLs on the same exams in Nassau and Suffolk counties respectively (NYSED, 2020). The lopsided academic

[1] Data were used from 2019 because no state testing took place in 2020 and state testing was optional for remote learners in 2021, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. 2019 represents the latest year where all public school students, with the exception of those who opted out, took the ELA and math tests. Data from 2022 have not been publicly available yet.

performance between ELLs and non-ELLs continues at the high school level. On Long Island in the 2019-2020 school year, where exemptions to Regents requirements were implemented due to state-wide school closures, 95% of non-ELLs graduated in June of their fourth year of high school, but only 47% of ELLs did (NYSED, 2020). Looking back to the 2018/2019 school year where these Regents requirements were still in place, the gap is even more pronounced. Although 94% of non-ELLs graduated in June of their fourth year of high school, only 33% of ELLs did. Possibly the most eye-opening disparity is between students graduating with a Regents diploma with advanced designation. In June of 2020, while 67% of non-ELLs graduated with said diploma, only 2% of ELLs did (NYSED, 2020). Figure 1 shows the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs in the 2018-2019 school year.

Figure 1.1

Achievement Gap Between ELLs and Non-ELLs on Long Island in the 2018-2019 School Yea



Note. The 2018-2019 year provided the last comprehensive data set before the Covid-19 pandemic. In subsequent years, the data are inconsistent across the examined measures of achievement.

Source. New York State Data, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

The dramatic increase in the ELL population on Long Island has created confusion in many districts, struggling to help ELLs close the achievement gap. As a result, the divide in academic achievement has left many educators within schools with a strange feeling of bewilderment, not knowing what changes need to be made to reverse the disparity in performance. Unfortunately, school districts do not understand the root causes of the problem, leaving them to ponder the situation. They must begin to understand demographic shifts and the varying needs of their new student body. To effectively meet the needs of the changing populations, schools must examine possible causes of the achievement gap that result from the new-found diversity in their student bodies.

Educators are underprepared to teach students of cultures and races different from their own and teachers express an overall frustration over the lack of preparation and understanding of how to meet the needs of ELLs, as several researchers have demonstrated (Coady et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2010; Peercy et al., 2015; Polat, 2010; Song, 2016; Ukpokodu, 2011). Looking at the research, there are many factors that impact the academic success of ELLs. One aspect to consider is the impact of culture and worldview in the classroom. To understand the cultural needs of their students, teachers must first understand their own cultural identity and worldview. Exploring teachers' understandings of their own worldviews and the worldviews of their current students may be a first step in closing the achievement gap. It is particularly important to examine this phenomenon on Long Island due to the changing demographics and linguistic compositions of the classrooms. Looking at educators who return to their childhood schools to teach, in districts where these above-mentioned shifts in linguistic diversity have taken place can provide important insight into the role that place attachment has in understanding others' worldviews. Do these teachers see the students in front of them or do the memories of the past

interfere with their view of the present? Defining worldview is essential to understanding this phenomenon.

Worldview

Worldview is typically defined as the lens that people view the world. As Koltko-Rivera (2000) stated,

> A worldview is a way of describing the world and life within it. It is a set of beliefs…regarding what the world is, what exists in the world, what experiences are good or bad, and what types of behaviors and relationships are proper or improper. (p. 2)

In terms of education, Ukpokodu (2011) argued that many teachers and teacher candidates do not understand the role their own cultural socialization, or worldview, has in their understanding of their own values and beliefs. Knowing one's own cultural socialization is something they must comprehend before they can understand that of others. Unfortunately, Ukpokudo stated that teachers enrolling in diversity courses felt ill prepared to teach students who did not look like them. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that they do not have "knowledge of self as a sociocultural being" (p. 442). It is only once teachers can recognize their own culture and worldview that they can then recognize and understand the culture and worldviews of their students. Recognizing the impact that worldview has in the classroom is essential to improving student learning. As Hammond (2015) argued,

> At the deep cultural level, our brain is encoding itself with the particular worldview we will carry into our formative years. Two people from different cultures can look at the same event and have very different reactions to it because of the meaning they attach to the event based on their deep culture. (p. 23)

In other words, teachers and students could be experiencing the same event at the same time and be interpreting it very differently based on their worldview and culture, leading to misunderstandings in the classroom. Cross-cultural understanding and worldview are not the only factors impacting ELLs in the classroom. The lack of readiness for educating ELLs, in particular, is an even more pronounced problem within the research.

ELLs in the Classroom

Numerous studies have indicated how few teachers feel qualified and prepared to educate ELLs (Coady et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2010; Peercy et al., 2015; Polat, 2010; Song, 2016). Coady et al. reported how classroom teachers, despite specific training in the best methods for teaching ELLs at the pre-service level, were unable to modify and adjust lessons to meet the language and cultural needs of their students. Polat explained how both pre-service and in-service teachers indicated that field and practicum experiences needed to improve prior to entering the teaching profession in order to meet the sociocultural and linguistic needs of ELLs.

There is no right formula to teach any student, but due to the diverse linguistic, educational, and cultural background of ELLs, finding a method or lesson that will work for all is a more difficult proposition. As a result, teachers require proper pre-service and in-service instruction to meet the individual needs of ELLs in the classroom. The lack of preparation for educating ELLs appears to be especially true when lessons involve difficult content. As Peercy et al. (2015) indicated, as content becomes more difficult, mainstream teachers become more confused as to how to meet the needs of the ELLs in their classroom. The result of this inadequate preparation ties back to the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. However, training alone will not be enough to meet the academic, linguistic, and sociocultural needs of ELLs. To accommodate the needs of ELLs, educators must also examine their own bonds and

attachments to the communities in which they teach and how those bonds have shaped the lens in which they view the world. In addition, teachers must also understand the bonds and attachments their students have with the school and community, along with the sociocultural contexts of their own background and that of their students to gain greater insight into their students' worldviews. Finally, educators must gain a greater appreciation of how their students develop and use language and the cultural nature of language and thinking. Therefore, the combined theoretical framework of sociocultural theory, place attachment, and topophilia will be discussed below to help make sense of the challenges educators have in educating their ELLs.

Theoretical Framework

People can form bonds not only with people, but also with places. The relationships people have with places can be, at times, as powerful as the ones they have with other human beings (Low & Altman, 1992). These relationships with people and places can affect the lens in which people view the world, impacting their understanding of others (Relph, 1976). Of particular importance is when the places people have bonded with change both architecturally and demographically, but the emotional attachments still exist. The bond that people have to specific places is referred to as place attachment (Giuliani, 2003) and the emotion of that bond is known as topophilia (Tuan, 1990). Both place attachment and topophilia are described in more detail in the following section.

Place Attachment

Place attachment falls under the field of human geography, which researches "the emotional qualities of place and human life" (Pile, 2009, p. 7). Attributed to the work of Relph (1976), place attachment refers to bonds that people have with places due to past experiences in those environments: "Those aspects of the lived-world that we distinguish as places are

differentiated because they involve a concentration of our intentions, our attitudes, purposes, and experience" (Relph, 1976, p. 43). As a result of these experiences, these places cause individuals to emote certain feelings attached to those environments. For teachers returning to their childhood schools, these bonds affect how they view the changes in the community in both population and architecture. Although aspects of teachers' childhood schools may be the same, the student body may be completely different. The children seated in front of educators every day may look similar to those of the past, but their needs are very different. As they look through those changes in demographics, teachers may question what they previously knew about their communities and schools, what they currently comprehend, and what they need to learn for the future.

Communities can shape who people currently are and who they will become in the future. Relph (1976) wrote, "Where an identity has developed through experience in communion or in community it will endure for as long as the symbols and significance of that place retain their meaning" (p.60). Teachers' identities are shaped by many factors, including their childhood experiences in their schools and communities. These identities also help form an individual's worldview, affecting how they view every aspect of their life. Helping teachers understand their own bonds with their childhood schools, how those bonds have formed who they are, and how those bonds impact their view of any changes that have taken place in the schools can be done through examining the theory of place attachment. In addition, it can be explored through topophilia, or the emotion of that bond.

Topophilia

Although place attachment arose through the field of human geography, topophilia falls under the study of environmental sciences. Tuan (1990) introduced the concept of *topophilia* to

help explain how people bond with their environment and how these environments help form people's worldview: "The word 'topophilia' is a neologism, useful in that it can be defined broadly to include all the human being's affective ties with the material environment" (p. 93). Tuan believed that topophilia is a feeling or emotion formed as a result of interactions within a community, impacted significantly by the environment of that location. He believed that when the feeling of topophilia is strong, "we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol" (p. 93). Schools can also serve as a symbol for people. They can be a symbol of success or failure, the past or the future, happiness or sadness. Schools can have varying meanings for different people depending on their past experiences within those environments. These experiences that educators have had in their childhood schools have also helped form who they have become as an adult. Examining a teacher's bond with their community and how it impacts their identity is important. However, it alone cannot explain educators' understanding of the unique needs of the ELLs in their classrooms. To truly comprehend who ELLs are and how language and culture plays a role in their development, it is also necessary to look at sociocultural theory (SCT).

Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky introduced SCT to help explain how language, knowledge, and learning are impacted by culture and environment (Shabani, 2016, p. 2). According to Vygotsky (1978), all learning predates school attendance and is based on previous experiences. Just as place attachment and topophilia are impacted by past events, so is language development. Vygotsky explained that language is a social human process by which one can reflect upon experiences that take place. Language is considered a tool for thought. While speech is external language, thought is internal language. Since language is essential for academic success, and language is social and

cultural in nature, a teacher's understanding of this concept is a precursor to helping students succeed in school.

Too often for ELLs, their English level serves as a barrier to their success in a classroom. They are made to feel as though their home language is not as valuable as English, the language of their school. Julia Alvarez (1998), an author of poetry and literature, described her experience learning English: "I grew insecure about my Spanish. My native tongue was not quite as good as English, as if words like *columpio* were illegal immigrants trying to cross a border into another language" (p. 24). However, if teachers could better understand how language is a tool for thought, tapping into a child's home language would assist in the thinking and processing of information taught in the classroom. Understanding language development would help educators make classroom materials, lessons, and teaching more accessible to all students, including ELLs.

Problem Statement

The root causes of the underperformance of ELLs academically on Long Island, as demonstrated by both test scores and graduation rates (NYSED 2020), must be examined to help close the achievement gap between ELLs and their non-ELL peers. To do this, teachers must gain a greater understanding of ELLs and their specific needs. As mentioned previously, many classroom teachers struggle with effectively educating ELLs (Coady et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2010; Peercy et al., 2015; Polat, 2010; Song, 2016). However, the difficulty with meeting the needs of ELLs cannot be explained by deficiencies in teacher-preparation programs and professional development alone.

To effectively educate students, teachers must understand the cultural norms of their students. As Corson (2001) argued, when cultural misunderstandings arise between teachers and students, students are too often blamed for behavioral and academic struggles: "While the

students themselves are marked down for not understanding the message of the school, it is really the teachers who seem to be lacking in understanding" (p. 45). Therefore, teachers must appreciate who their pupils are. To truly know their students, teachers must first recognize the differences that exist socially, linguistically, and culturally between their students and themselves (Hammond, 2015). Understanding these differences is critical in the classroom because culture and thinking are intrinsically linked. Vygotsky explained that all thinking is based on cultural signs and symbols. It is through understanding the cultural symbols that students attain higher-level thinking skills (Greder & Shields, 2008). Additionally, Vygotsky proposed that thinking allows people to recognize the outside world, understand others, and appreciate how their own experiences help them know themselves (Greder & Shields, 2008). Hammond (2015) supported this argument as she stated, "one's culture…is part of how the brain makes sense of the world and helps us function in our environment" (p. 23). As O. Ukpokodu (personal communication, March 26, 2021) argued educators must recognize and understand their own worldview before they can recognize and understand that of their students.

Appreciating how teachers' worldviews were formed through their bonds with their communities is a first step in cross-cultural understanding. It is not possible to recognize how students' worldviews are formed until educators comprehend their own. As such, understanding worldview formation may help schools gain insight into one contributing factor of the achievement gap that exists among ELLs on Long Island. How the development of one's worldview is affected by topophilia and place attachment and the impact that topophilia and place attachment have on understanding the worldview of others has yet to be examined in the literature and may play an important role in raising the performance of ELLs in the classroom and improving teacher practice.

The literature has yet to uncover how place attachment and topophilia affect educators who return to their childhood schools to teach where there have been dramatic shifts in the linguistic and cultural diversity of the school. Do these teachers see the students who are currently in their rooms, or, rather, do they have visions of the pupils of yesteryear? Are they able to make sense of the changing population and their unique needs, or are they struggling to understand the transformation of their communities? The past will always be a part of who people are and it influences the way in which people see the world. Reconciling past experiences and the impact they have on teachers is important in transforming the future experiences of students.

Purpose of the Study

Through a multimodal phenomenological approach, I explored how topophilia and place attachment informed the worldview of teachers in the kindergarten through 12th-grade setting and their understanding of the worldviews of others, as they returned to educate in schools they attended as children. The study took place on Long Island in five school districts where the ELL population has shown dramatic growth over the past 20 years. Whereas twenty years ago these districts were majority monolingual English speaking, the current demographics present a different picture. In all five districts over 90% of the ELLs spoke Spanish in their homes (NYSED, 2020) and with only a few exceptions, when the participants spoke about ELLs in their classrooms, they referred only to their Spanish-speaking ELLs.

As previously discussed, a teacher's life experiences affect how they educate their students, and this is no different on Long Island, New York. Growing up on an island has molded who Long Islanders are, where the urban experience of New York City is only a train ride away, the beaches are within a few minutes' drive, and farms and wineries are abundant out on the East

End. The mix of quasi-rural, suburban, urban, and nautical atmosphere provides Long Islanders with a richness of diverse experiences that few other places provide. Due to the increasing diversity of the population of Long Island, it is also producing a growing number of multicultural encounters which helped better explore this study's phenomenon.

Significance

As previously demonstrated, the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs is enormous. Overcoming this achievement gap will involve understanding the various contributing factors affecting the overall academic performance of ELLs in the classroom. One important consideration is an awareness and comprehension of the cultures of the students in educators' classrooms. To recognize the unique needs of their students, teachers must first understand their own culture and worldviews so that they are able to recognize that others may hold worldviews that differ greatly from their own. Understanding worldview is the key to unlocking the thinking and language development of students, as both are culturally dependent. As Vygotsky (1978) explained, "Every function in a child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people, and then inside the child" (p.57). Hammond (2015) echoed this notion by stating, "culture is the way that every brain makes sense of the world…The brain uses cultural information to turn everyday happenings in to meaningful events" (p.22). Therefore, culture impacts not only language and thinking but also how students navigate and see their world.

Educators returning to teach in their childhood schools must make sense of the linguistic changes within the community and what they mean for their teaching. In the case of this study, the linguistic changes refer primarily to Spanish-speaking families, as that is home language of the vast majority of ELLs within the school districts studied. The cultural and linguistic identity

of the ELLs in this study is of particular significance due to the rise in xenophobia, particularly during the Trump administration, which may influence the way the participants perceive the immigrants in their schools and community (Villavicenio et al., 2021). As Hjem and Nagayoshi (2011) argued, "If immigrants are culturally similar to the host society, they may not be culturally threatening. Moreover, wealthy immigrants who create job opportunities in the host society may not be regarded as an economic threat" (p. 818). The Latinx immigrants in this study were both culturally dissimilar to the communities they lived in and could be perceived as posing an economic threat due to their lack of wealth. Additionally, due to cultural differences between the teachers and their immigrant students, their worldviews may vary greatly from each other, leading to cultural misunderstandings.

As such, it is important to explore teachers' feelings of place attachment and topophilia toward their school and community and the impact place attachment has on their understanding of their students' worldviews and educational needs. Helping teachers gain greater insight into how their own worldview was formed by their community, school, and family can lead to an increased understanding of their students' worldviews. In turn, teachers will be better able to assess their students' cultural and academic needs and find ways to meet said needs in the classroom.

Design and Methods

This study used a multimodal hermeneutic phenomenological study to examine place attachment, topophilia, and the formation of worldview. The multimodal approach incorporated three interviews conducted in three different manners with seven different teachers. The three separate interview approaches were necessary to truly understand the phenomenon being researched, especially since the phenomenon involves appreciating the impact that locations have

on individuals. The first interview was a standard oral interview where I asked questions and recorded the participants answers. This progressed into the second interview, which used a modified *Photovoice* technique.

Photovoice traditionally involves using photos to examine problems that exist within a community, helping tell a story that words alone cannot effectively communicate (Wang & Burris, 1997). However, rather than using photos to uncover community problems, I used the photos to evoke memories of the past and tell the story of the present. Through these memories, I was able to gain a greater understanding of the bond the teachers had with their schools and how this bond informed their worldview.

Finally, the third interview incorporated a community tour, which, served as a way to gain insight into the participants' bond with the community and their reaction to any changes that have taken place in their hometown. The movement of the participants—either by walking or driving during the tour—lowered the participants' inhibitions, and I was able to receive more authentic answers than a traditional sit-down oral interview would have provided. Since memories are contextual in nature, being in a space that was important to the participants helped trigger vivid memories that I would have otherwise been unable to unlock.

Given that I depended on the memory of the participants, and these memories may or may not have been completely accurate, the photos and community tour also served as a way to ensure a more reliable vision of the past. As Allende (2003) stated, "I can't pretend to know what part of my memory is reliable and how much I've invented, because the job of defining the line between them is beyond my ability" (pp. 178-179). However, through the photos and community tour, the certainty of the memories improved.

Conclusion

Through this multimodal hermeneutic phenomenological study, I gained insight into the role that place attachment and topophilia play in developing one's own worldview and the ability to recognize the worldviews of others. Studying educators who return to their childhood schools helped me better understand how educators' bonds with their schools and communities affected the teachers' knowledge of who their students are and how they can best meet their unique academic needs. This study was necessary, especially on Long Island, due to the dramatic increase in the ELL population in public schools over the past 10 years. Changing demographics, in general, present schools with a challenge as to how to meet the diverse needs of the student population. However, an increase in the ELL population raises an obstacle that few Long Island schools have been able to decipher yet. This study provided some insight into one contributing factor to the achievement gap faced by ELLs on Long Island.

The following chapters describe the current research available regarding ELLs, the methods used to conduct this research, the results of the data collection, and the conclusions made based on that data. Chapter 2 is the literature review that explores the many aspects of the complex dilemma that classroom teachers face when educating multilingual learners. It also goes into greater detail of the multiple theoretical frameworks of SCT, topophilia and place attachment, and why these are necessary for this particular study. Chapter 3 discusses the methods of the study, examining the impact of place attachment on teachers' understanding of their worldviews and that of their students through multimodal hermeneutic phenomenology. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the data collection. Chapter 5 provides conclusions based on the thematic analysis of the data, presents answers to the research questions, describes implications for practice, and offers suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As explained in Chapter 1, there is an enormous achievement gap between English language learners (ELLs) and non-ELLs in terms of performance on standardized tests and graduation rates. There are many aspects to consider when attempting to close the disparity in academic performance. Arguably, one of the most important factors contributing to this achievement gap is the cultural mismatch between teachers and their students. Nieto and Bode (2008) asserted when the culture of the home and school are at odds with each other, the result is often school failure. The demographic mismatch creates cultural misunderstandings, which impair communication, learning, and teaching. Understanding diversity in human behavior is a first step in alleviating cultural misunderstandings. To explain the differences between individuals' internalized behaviors, perceptions and beliefs, Bourdieu introduced the concept of *habitus*. According to Costa and Murphy (2015), *habitus* "is a complex social process in which individual and collective ever-structuring dispositions develop in practice to justify individuals' perspectives, values, actions and social positions" (p. 4). MacLeod (2009) further explained that "habitus is composed of the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of those inhabiting one's social world" (p. 15). In other words, the environment in which we live influences who we are and how we perceive the world. Although Bourdieu introduced habitus to help explain social reproduction within social classes (Macleod, 2009), I argue that habitus can be used to help understand the concept of worldview because of its link to attitude, beliefs, and experiences.

A teacher's understanding of their own worldview and an educator knowing that others' worldviews may differ from their own is the first step in diminishing the cultural mismatch that currently exists between teachers and students. *Worldview* can be defined as "sets of beliefs and assumptions that describe reality…In the largest sense, a worldview is the interpretive lens one

uses to understand reality and one's existence within it" (Koltko-Rivera, 2004, pp. 3-4). In other words, worldview is the way in which we understand the world and interact within it. However, in order to recognize the difference between one's own worldview and that of another, people must first reflect upon their own beliefs and values. As O. Ukpokodu (personal communication, March 26, 2021) argued, "Teachers must take time to know who they are, understand the funds of knowledge, pay attention to stereotypes, and understand worldview…If you don't understand who you are culturally with positions and worldviews, you can't understand others." Knowledge of worldview is the first step in developing cultural competence, or an understanding that not only are there differences between cultures, but there are also varying needs based on these differences (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014).

However, due to the complex needs of ELLs, an awareness of differing worldviews alone is not enough to understand why schools are failing their ELLs. When examining the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs, it is also important to consider numerous other contributing factors, including segregated schools, teacher nostalgia, cultural capital, *funds of knowledge,* subtractive schooling, language codes, and the impact that all these factors have on both teachers and ELLs. In regard to attracting and hiring educators who understand the students and communities in which they work, I examine the significance of Grow Your Own (GYO) teacher programs, which speaks directly to teachers returning to their childhood schools as educators. In addition, the multiple theoretical frameworks of place attachment, topophilia, SCT, and their significance to educators can help contextualize the phenomenon in this study. While` place attachment and topophilia can help explain teachers' bonds and emotional ties with their schools, SCT can help explain the language development of students within those schools. The three theories are explained in greater detail below.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's 1978 construct of SCT provided insight into the link between culture, language, and learning. Vygotsky introduced SCT to explore how people think, learn, and problem-solve. SCT proposed that all learning is rooted in social interactions and that language is the tool for thought. He argued that language and thinking cannot be separated from each other because they are tightly intertwined. For Vygotsky, language is first external, used to communicate between individuals, but then it becomes internalized, which is the mechanism that individuals use to think. Researchers have furthered this theory to acknowledge that not only are language and thinking intertwined but so are culture and language (Mahn, 1999). Vygotsky stated, "the experiences of a child and the 'unmediated' influence of the child's experience are documented in his memory and directly determine the entire structure of the young child's thought" (p. 50). Vygotsky also believed that learning predates attending school. Therefore, every child will enter school with different levels of learning in various subject matters. All learning is a social process, and as a result, social experiences are the foundation of all learning. An individual's social history helps determine the comprehension level of what is taught (Allahyar & Nazari, 2012). This is of particular importance for teachers of linguistically diverse students to understand, as their students' experiences and thought patterns might differ from that of the dominant culture.

Vygotsky (1978) also asserted that the way students learn best is through the concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), which refers to the difference between children's actual development and their potential level of development, or tasks that they can complete when aided by a teacher or more capable peer. As a result, teachers must provide learning

environments that take into account students' prior knowledge and culture, and from there, they can elaborate upon these experiences to reach higher levels of thinking. In other words, teachers cannot effectively provide input for their students if they are unaware of their level of output (Villamizar Castrillon, 2017).

In this theory, Vygotsky (1978) pointed out an important distinction between ZPD by examining two children at equivalent levels of actual development, arguing that two students at the same level of actual development can have very different potential levels of development. With assistance, one child can move up to three years above their actual level of development with the help of a teacher or more capable peer, while another, perhaps, only one year. This theory has crucial implications for linguistically diverse students, as students may appear to be at a low level of actual development because of linguistic differences, but they actually possess a high level of potential development. According to Hill and Flynn (2008), a student's capacity for learning may be overlooked by teachers who are not versed in second language learning. For those who are not trained in the education of ELLs, when children are at the beginner level or entering level of English, the work given by these teachers is, too often, not cognitively demanding. In short, when the work does not involve higher-level thinking skills, it is hard to find their ZPD and as a result, students are not encouraged to reach their next level of development.

Teachers who do not have exposure to the cultural and linguistic factors affecting their students may inadvertently overlook their students' ZPD. However, that may not be the only aspect of multilingual learners overlooked by teachers. In fact, it is likely a combination of numerous factors, including both academic and socio-emotional aspects of teachers' lives that have led to the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. Understanding all of the elements

that contribute to the effective teaching of ELLs is vital for their success in school. As such, it is important to examine another influencing factor in the education of ELLs. Place attachment and topophilia can help make sense of how teachers' bonds to their schools and emotions affect their ability to understand who and what is in front of them in their classrooms.

Place Attachment

How teachers and others view the world impacts how they behave and interact in certain spaces. Human geographers examine "how human culture…develops differently in different places. They believe that human beings attach emotions, significance, and values to places and in so doing turn empty locations and environments into intensely meaningful places" (Boyle, 2015, p. 5). Taylor (2000) also argued that places often become metaphors within our social memory. In sum, these memories are powerful and influence not only how people remember things in a positive or negative way but also shapes how they navigate those places in current times.

Theories around place attachment arose under this subject area of human geography. Place attachment refers to the complicated phenomenon that people bond with places and that places can influence people's affect and emotions (Boyle, 2015; Low & Altman, 1992). The work on place attachment began with research by Fried (Giuliani, 2003). In his study, Fried (1963) examined the effects of forced relocation on 566 men and women in the West End of Boston, which was considered an urban slum. He discussed the extreme grief that the former West End residents felt after their eviction from their neighborhood. He measured their level of sadness and the factors that affected these levels of depression. While Fried introduced the concept of place attachment, the first comprehensive text on the subject of place attachment is attributed to E. Relph (1976). Place attachment, according to Relph, refers to the fact that:

> The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence. There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particularly moving experiences. The association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world. (p. 43)

In other words, places shape who we are and how we experience the world. Giuliani (2003) furthered this notion by arguing, "not only do we acknowledge the existence of an affective bond with places, but also the importance this can have in qualifying our existence, whether positively or negatively" (p. 137). We not only bond with places as we do with people, but those places affect how we live and how we see ourselves. Low and Altman (1992) explained that place attachment is not a singular notion made from separate parts but rather a complex phenomenon composed of multidimensional perspectives. According to their research, people form bonds to their environment and the product of this attachment is not only a result of the place but also a result of the people who interact with those places.

Although place attachment focuses on the bonds people have with spaces, another theory, topophilia, places emphasis on the emotions that result from the attachments that people have to their environments (Guiliani, 2003; Kyle & Chick, 2007).

Topophilia

Place attachment, therefore, takes on a different twist for Tuan, who coined the term *topophilia.* Whereas place attachment arose under the field of human geography, topophilia, due to its focus on the environment, emerged from the field of environmental sciences. Tuan (1990) defined *topophilia* as "the affective bond between people and place or setting" (p. 4). For Tuan,

topophilia is the emotion that results from a bond with a place. Tuan distinguished the difference between a place and space by arguing that a space only becomes a place when we, as people, value it (Guiliani, 2003; Kyle & Chick, 2007). Munoz Gonzalez (2005) furthered Tuan's point by stating that people can have strong feeling towards a place, just as they would a person, but they can also be ambivalent to a place as equally as they would to a person. Building upon this argument, Hoelscher (2006) concluded that the depths of one's feelings of topophilia may range from indifference to emotionally charged to the elevated status of symbolic. Despite this range of emotions, he believes that topophilia is generally a positive feeling.

For Tuan (1990), it was important to examine the impact culture, experiences, and the environment had upon each other in order to understand the emotions that people attached to places. Tuan, unlike Relph, more directly drew the connection between emotions felt towards places and culture. He explained how "the concepts of 'culture' and 'environment' overlap as do the concepts of 'man' and 'nature'" (p. 59). More importantly to my current research, he also distinctly linked topophilia to worldview: "world view reflects the rhythms and constraints of the natural environment" (p. 79). Tuan believed that our social and physical settings, and our affective bonds to those settings, help construct our worldview and our perceptions of what we experience. Understanding the distinctness of topophilia, place attachment, and SCT is important, but more essential to this research is the intersection of the three theories.

Need for Multiple Theoretical Frameworks

The multiple theoretical frameworks of SCT, place attachment, and topophilia are necessary for a variety of reasons, but most importantly because culture is based on our experiences, socialization, and environment. As Hammond (2015) stated, "the brain uses cultural information to turn everyday happenings into meaningful events" (p. 22). Culture in turn impacts

our bonds with places and our language development. The relationship is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1

Threefold Theoretical Framework

Using these multiple theoretical frameworks, I surmise that teachers' understanding of their own worldviews is based on their culture and thus impacts their own place attachment, topophilia, and language development. Educators' knowledge of the social and cultural nature of language development is essential to the successful education of all students, but this knowledge is necessary for teachers to ensure the academic achievement of ELLs. Additionally, the two other components of the framework, place attachment and topophilia, affect teachers' abilities to make sense of the changing demographics of their childhood schools and the impact these changes have on their students' academic achievement. Therefore, all three components of the

theoretical framework are necessary to understand how teachers returning to their childhood schools make sense of the linguistic changes in their current classrooms.

Overarching Themes

Language plays an important role in the development of children's identities. This is especially true for multilingual learners. Nieto (2003) stated, "Language is intimately linked to culture. It is a primary means by which people express their cultural values and the lens through which they view the world" (p. 189). Unfortunately, many monolingual teachers do not understand this connection between language, culture, and an individual's identity.

Multiple researchers have demonstrated how inadequately prepared educators are for teaching linguistically diverse students (Coady et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2010; Peercy et al., 2015; Polat, 2010; Song, 2016). Many content area teachers believe that the ELL specialists are solely responsible for meeting the needs of ELLs (Song, 2016). Polat (2010) explained that the reason so many teachers feel unprepared for educating ELLs is that they had inadequate fieldwork experience while enrolled in an education program to help them develop a better understanding of how to best help ELLs succeed in the classroom. His research also uncovered that in-service teachers have less understanding of multilingual and multicultural learners than their pre-service peers. Many teachers yearn for classrooms of yesteryear where students' cultures mirrored that of their teachers (Goodson et al., 2006). This may be the result of a combination of a lack of training and a discomfort level regarding multilingual learners.

As Goodson et al. (2006) explained, teacher nostalgia has an immense impact on feelings toward changing demographics. While teachers remember the good old days of the past, they remain in buildings that represent a changing future. Memory, place, time, and culture go hand in

hand and influence how people think and react to their surroundings (Goodson et al., 2006; Legen et al., 2019; Taylor, 2000).

To effectively teach diverse learners, teachers must understand the role culture plays in their development. Gay (2018) argued that even though we may not be aware of it, culture influences how we think and communicate, affecting how we teach and learn. However, developing an understanding of a student population is often hampered by a lack of cross-cultural education at a pre-service level and minimal professional development at the in-service level (Kumar & Lauermann, 2018; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Yang & Montgomery, 2001). As Ukpokodu (2011) argued one contributing factor to the lack of cross-cultural understanding is the vast number of teachers who attended segregated schools as children.

Integrated schools provide for greater levels of racial and cultural understanding as well as greater comfort levels among diverse populations (Johnson, 2019; Wells et al., 2009). Unfortunately, when teachers attended segregated schools as children, they were not given the opportunity to develop a deep understanding of other cultures. The lack of exposure to other cultures can lead to misunderstandings when faced with the many and varied worldviews that shape who people are today.

Attaining an understanding of the multiplicity of worldviews that exist has great implications for schools. When teachers look at the assets students bring to a classroom, they go the route of a *funds of knowledge* approach and build upon prior knowledge to enhance learning (Moll et al., 2005). However, when teachers only view their students by their deficits, it can lead to *subtractive schooling*, where school systems devalue the cultures of students and these cultures are eventually stripped away from them, leading them to become cultureless beings.

Subtractive schooling severely impacts students' educational achievement (Valenzuela, 1999). The two concepts of *funds of knowledge* and *subtractive schooling* are not mutually exclusive. Teachers can experience movement between the two. This literature review examines and explains all these themes to help lead to a greater understanding of the complex dilemma classroom teachers face when working with multilingual populations.

Cultural Competence and Worldview

Cultural competence is necessary for educators to teach in a diverse country with multilingual students from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. To better understand cultural competence, one must first have an understanding of culture. Although holidays and foods are the most visual components of culture, most aspects of culture lie deep within an individual (Hammond, 2015). Many fail to understand this innermost aspect of culture, which is "made up of tacit knowledge and unconscious assumptions that govern our worldview" (Hammond, p. 23). Nieto (1999) defined *culture* as the way "people participate in the world through social and political relationships informed by history as well as by race, ethnicity, language, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and other circumstances related to identity and experience" (p. 48). Ratts and Pedersen (2014) explained that culture is not just an external show but rather something from within and cannot be separated from the experiences a person has lived.

The term *cultural competence* was first coined in the field of nursing by Madeleine Leiniger. The roots of cultural competence fall in the fields of both nursing and counseling (Rosenjack Burcham, 2002). Cultural competence entered the field of teaching through the work of Nieto and Bode in the form of multicultural education. According to Ratts and Pedersen (2014), multicultural competence is first an awareness that there may be differences between

one's own culture and that of others. It is then a knowledge of the unique qualities that exist among cultures. Finally, it is the skills to assess the individual needs of people based on their culture. Unfortunately, too often teachers do not have the pre-service or in-service training to develop cultural competence (Kumar & Lauermann, 2018; Ukopokodu, 2011).

Kumar and Lauermann (2018) found that the time spent in teacher-education programs did little to decrease negative stereotypes of different populations. Not surprisingly, the more negative stereotypes individuals held, the more uncomfortable they were among different cultures. Ukpokodu (2011) went beyond comfort level to argue that teacher candidates do not understand how culture impacts how people see and interpret the world around them. She argued that pre-service teachers cannot understand the culture of others until they discover their own culture. She continued to explain that to develop cultural competence, schools of education must scaffold cultural understanding, depending on the candidates' comfort level. However, even teachers or teacher candidates who think they are culturally competent, when exposed to a wide range of cultures, can realize how narrow their knowledge actually is. Through a self-study, Ross (2008) discovered, despite believing she was well-versed in cultural competence, her knowledge of cultures was extremely limited when listening to the stories of others from around the world.

Since it is apparent that many teachers have limited levels of cross-cultural understanding, it is important to examine how people develop cultural competence. O. Ukpokodu (personal communication, March 26, 2021) stated that to develop cultural competence, you must first understand who you are as a cultural being and your own worldview:

> The beliefs and values we have been socialized into form the lens we see and engage in the world. How we judge others and assess others is based on our standards, lens, and worldview.

Thus, our worldview impacts how we see others and understand ourselves and our world. It is also, according to Ukpokodu, the first step in developing cultural competence. This concept of worldview is complex and defined differently depending on the context and researcher.

According to Koltko-Rivera (2004), "worldviews are sets of beliefs and assumptions that describe reality" (p. 3). Some researchers have examined worldview as a dichotomy of a culture's value of collectivism or individualism or a continuum between the two poles (Akkus et al., 2017; Becker et al., 2012; Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2019; Oyserman, 1993). According to this line of research, some cultures—usually Western societies—are viewed as individualistic societies, where personal achievement is valued over the community as a whole and individuals are in control of their own destiny. Other cultures—usually non-Western societies—are attributed to collectivism, where the welfare of the community is more important than that of the individual, and fate and behavior are influenced greatly by society (Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2019). However, both Oyserman and Becker et al. determined that collectivism and individualism cannot be simplified into Western versus non-Western societies. Since cultures are not monolithic, individual beliefs within those societies are diverse. Other research has indicated that worldview, once viewed as a product of religious beliefs (atheism, agnosticism, and theism), should be shifted to incorporating multidisciplinary aspects of psychology and other sciences (Taves et al., 2018).

Unlike the previously reviewed researchers, Koltko-Rivera (2004) proposed a collated model of worldview, which refutes previous single-aspect models. Koltko-Rivera also cautioned against lumping values and beliefs with worldviews. Rather, he argued that some beliefs and values are not worldview beliefs and that worldview statements are made from existential beliefs, evaluative beliefs, and prescriptive and proscriptive beliefs (or values). His integrated

worldview theory asserts that self, behavior, and experience are all interrelated and that culture is central to psychology. In other words, worldview helps explain variance in human behavior that may otherwise go unexplained or misunderstood.

It is this collated model of worldview that is essential to my current research as the first step in developing cultural competence. Unfortunately, due to a lack of exposure to different cultures prior to teaching, many educators are at a disadvantage when trying to understand the worldviews of others. As Ukpokodu (2011) explained, most students enrolled in teacher-education programs have had few significant interactions with people of other races and cultures. The lack of intercultural interactions is a result of segregated schooling, and it has a lasting impact on students' lives.

Segregated Schools

To understand why some teachers (and educational leaders) have such high levels of cultural incompetence, it is essential to explore the schools they attended as children as a source of monolithic ethnocentrism. As Kumar and Lauermann (2018) concluded, the biases and stereotypes held by preservice teachers as they enter their teaching career with begin within their families, communities, and own school experiences. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that segregated schools have impacted teachers' abilities to develop cultural competence. Without exposure to cultures different from their own, it is difficult to develop a deep understanding of them, beyond the superficial ideas one can find in a book. Ross (2008) added to this argument by stating that pre-service teachers cannot move from a basic understanding of superficial aspects of culture to those elements most important to students' cultural identity without ongoing personal interactions with people of those cultures.

Johnson (2019) confirmed the need for intimate interactions with diverse populations to develop cultural competence: “Children in these (segregated) schools struggle to develop the ability to empathize with others, to appreciate the validity of other cultures, and to experience ‘the art of thinking individually together’” (p. 65). In other words, elementary, middle, and high schools are excellent places for children to learn from and experience people who are different from themselves, whether it be socio-economic, linguistic, or cultural differences. Through interactions with diverse populations, people learn to respect and understand differences in our multicultural society.

Wells et al. (2009) also documented the roles schools play in multicultural understanding. Through interviews with adults who attended desegregated schools as students, these former students explained that they had an opportunity to form relationships and gain a greater understanding of people of different races and ethnic backgrounds on a meaningful level. The interracial interactions increased their comfort level of being around various races as adults, a comfort level they stated did not exist among friends and colleagues who had attended segregated schools. Therefore, one of the effects of segregated schools is that many Americans graduate without the ability to understand the worldviews and cultures of others. It is the segregated past that led many teachers to view changing demographics in a negative light, blaming students for a lack of motivation and for being “academically alienated” (Goodson et al., 2006, p. 48). Longing for the past in response to the changing present is referred to as teacher nostalgia.

Teacher Nostalgia

Goodson et al. (2006) explored the previously discussed phenomenon of human geography through the view of teacher nostalgia. They defined *nostalgia* as “idealized memories

that are situated in embittered experiences of the present" (p. 44). Their study examined the reaction of mid to late-career teachers to the changing demographics in their schools. These teachers held a nostalgia, where the students, in their mind, came to school ready to learn, and the schools were ideal locations for education. The demographics of those times reflected a mostly White, middle-class demographic, which was very different from the population they were currently teaching. Quite predictably, the teachers harbored a sense of bitterness toward diversity because the changing population made teaching, in their view, more difficult. Administrators told the educators that they had to alter how they taught to help the new student populations. This was a reform they did not embrace. The memories that the teachers had of the school as a "family" of students, educators, and staff, switched to a view of a broken family in which the level of mutual care and respect disappeared. This study has significant implications for the changing demographics of many suburban schools. The nostalgia that exists in teachers often inhibits their willingness to embrace new teaching methods, gain a greater understanding of their pupils, and look to innovation to best serve their students.

Effects of Worldview and Cultural Competence

It is not only teachers who are affected by their surroundings: "The existential, emotional, and psychological makeup of human beings leads them to make and experience different environments in different ways" (Boyle, 2015, p. 32). This experiential difference is especially true for students who come from families that are not of the dominant culture of the country where they live and attend school. Often, teachers of ELLs understand so little of their students' home lives that they are unable to see the abilities they bring to the classroom (Marshall & Toohey, 2010). However, when acknowledged, these assets can be converted into a form of capital that, in turn, can enhance their education.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1986) introduced the concept of *cultural capital* to help explain the disparity in achievement between children of different classes (and arguably cultures). He believed that cultural capital had three forms: an embodied state, or personality and attitudes related to one's culture; an objectified state, or goods such as books, art, and technology; and an institutionalized state, or recognition from an academic institution. Although all students possess cultural capital, their academic success is too often dependent on their understanding of the dominant culture, which school systems frequently assume that students already have (Sullivan, 2001). General knowledge of the societal values of the dominant culture is something that middle and upper-class families usually have, giving them an advantage in schools (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Bourdieu believed that each generation passes down their cultural capital to the next generation. Since a familiarity with the dominant culture is a prerequisite skill for academic success, schools have a tendency to reproduce societal inequities by failing to differentiate education based on the knowledge set students have when entering school (MacLeod, 2009). Gay (2018) argued that in American schools, the dominant culture is people coming from middle-class homes of European descent. It is difficult for teachers to effectively educate culturally and linguistically diverse students if they do not acknowledge that many students do not enter school with the same knowledge of the dominant culture that the educational system assumes they have.

Delpit (2006) furthered this concept of the *dominant culture* by referring to it as the "culture of power." She believed that for children to be successful in school, they must understand the culture of the people in power, or the dominant culture. While students from upper and middle-class homes understand this culture of power, those who are not from these

homes do not. This lack of knowledge leaves these students at a disadvantage upon entering schools, leading to achievement gaps. Compounding the issue is the fact that most people who are members of the culture of power are least able to acknowledge its existence. Understanding the impacts of the culture of power and its sister concept, cultural capital, is critical to the success of all students. This can be done through looking at what assets all children bring to the classroom. The *funds of knowledge* is one idea that examines children through an asset-based view, not a deficit lens.

Funds of Knowledge

How teachers react to culturally and linguistically diverse students has a tremendous impact on their students' academic achievement. Moll et al. (2005) believed that all children bring knowledge to the classroom that is an asset to learning. They coined the term *funds of knowledge* to label "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 72). Through an understanding of this knowledge base, teachers recognize what expertise their students bring to the classroom. By building upon what their students already know, lessons become more comprehensible. When recognizing all children as beings with cultural and cognitive resources, teachers take on an assets-based view of their students as opposed to one where they consider their students socially disorganized and intellectually deficient (Moll et al., 2005).

Through the *funds of knowledge* approach, parental involvement can increase and standardized test scores can improve. Boske and Benavente-McEnery (2012) examined the effect home visits had on academic achievement and test scores in a multilingual school. As more teachers completed in-home visits and learned more about the funds of knowledge or assets that their students brought to the classroom, parental involvement and achievement both increased.

Perhaps more importantly, the teachers witnessed the creation of bridges between the home and school cultures that never existed before, allowing all involved to gain a greater understanding of each other. This study appears to reverse what Bourdieu believed was the reproduction of social inequalities in schools. The school in the above study acknowledged that students could attain the cultural capital needed for success in school if the families and the school worked together to share each other's communal knowledge and assets.

Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) furthered the concept of *funds of knowledge* and evolved it into a vision of *funds of identity*, or "historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for people's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding" (p. 37). Since the *funds of identity* are the lens through which students learn, teachers must understand their students' *funds of identity* in order to determine which materials will appropriately help students make sense of a given curriculum (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Gaining a greater understanding of what proficiencies students bring to the classroom helps teachers develop materials that students relate to, making their education more comprehensible.

More than four decades earlier, in 1968, Freire (1992) demonstrated how everyone has knowledge to offer while hosting a meeting with agricultural workers. He played what he referred to as the "knowledge game," where he posed a question. If the farmers were unable to answer the question, he scored a point. The converse was also true; if the agricultural workers posed a question that he was unable to answer, they scored a point. The questioning went back and forth until a tie was reached. The point of this exercise was to help the agricultural workers understand that everyone has knowledge, but that knowledge is specific to the areas people have studied or places they have worked or lived. While addressing the laborers, he said, "You were

silent and said that only I could talk because I was the only one who knew anything. Then we played the knowledge game, and we tied ten to ten" (p. 39). By playing this game, Freire was able to show the laborers that they too were intelligent, but because their knowledge base was in a different field, it was often overlooked. Unfortunately, the silence that existed between the laborers and Freire also happens in many multilingual classrooms. Oftentimes, children lie mute because they feel they are not intelligent enough to contribute to class discussions or do not have the language skills to communicate their ideas clearly. They do not tap into their own knowledge base because it is so different from the cultural capital they are expected to have. Teachers must begin to access their students' knowledge base in order for them to make sense of the lessons at hand.

Gay (2018) concurred with the research of Esteban-Guitart and Moll and furthered the ideas of Freire. She believed that all students have skills or subjects in which they can excel. However, teachers do not always acknowledge the competencies that the students bring to the classroom. It may not be easy to apply the knowledge base students bring to the classroom setting since this expertise may be social, cultural, or political in nature, rather than academic. It is only through culturally responsive teaching that the diversity of learners can be recognized, respected, and that all teachers will see this knowledge as an asset to the classroom. However, culturally responsive teaching does not always happen in our education system and as a result, some students undergo subtractive schooling.

Subtractive Schooling

Valenzuela (1999) explored what happens to students when teachers do not build upon their pupils' cultural knowledge to enhance their educational experience. The term *subtractive schooling* describes the process in which students lose their cultural and linguistic selves as a

result of a school's desire to assimilate them into the American school system. Valenzuela argued that schools too often take away students' identities, which in turn weakens their support network, leading to academic failure. She concluded that second and third-generation American-born students of Mexican descent performed academically below their Mexican-born immigrant peers and significantly below their White, American-born counterparts. These Mexican-American students described feeling unwanted and misunderstood by their teachers. They were less confident than their immigrant peers in balancing the American culture of the school and the Mexican culture of the home, which was compounded by a lack of cultural understanding by their teachers.

Garza and Crawford (2005) witnessed the same subtractive schooling taking place in an affluent school district in the Western United States. Their study exposed the devaluation of students' native languages and cultures in an elementary school. As a result, the students believed that English was the only acceptable language of the school. Gainer and Larrotta (2010) demonstrated how teacher education programs, with supportive student teaching experiences, could help reverse subtractive schooling and turn it into a positive experience. As Nieto (2013) stated, "there is no need to erase part of one's identity in order to be successful" (p. 9). Teachers can respect both the cultural and linguistic identity of students while adding on the culture of the school. The two are not mutually exclusive, but rather, should be mutually inclusive. If teachers help bridge the gap between the cultural capital students enter schools with and that which they are assumed to have, subtractive schooling will not take place.

Linguistic Impacts

Respecting children's linguistic identity can have an enormous impact on their success in school. Bernstein (2003) stated, "Language is seen as an integrating or divisive phenomenon; as

the major process through which a culture is transmitted; the bearer of social genes" (p. 94). This statement is true in schools. The language students produce is too often used as a predictor of their academic potential. However, understanding linguistic differences is necessary to effectively teach all students. Delpit (1988) argued, "Children have the right to their own language, their own culture. We must fight cultural hegemony and fight the system by insisting that children be allowed to express themselves in their own language style" (p. 291). When teachers understand and respect the rights of children to express themselves in their own way, such openness could lead to greater achievement. However, as Nieto and Bode (2008) pointed out, the United States has a long history of denying people the right to express themselves through their native language, beginning with slaves, continuing with Indian Residential Schools, and more recently with English-only legislation. Today, there are still language codes that are respected by the school and those that are not.

Language Codes

Bernstein (2003) introduced *code theory* to explain the differences in language use within communities. More specifically linked to linguistics than Bourdieu's cultural capital, Bernstein made a distinction between two language codes existing in society: the elaborated code and the restricted code. According to Bernstein, restricted code represents language that is predictable for both the speakers and the listeners. It assumes a common knowledge between those involved in the conversation and, as a result, is not as explicit as the elaborated code. The elaborated code, on the other hand, is not predictable, has a higher level of both syntactic and lexical organization, and has no assumption of mutual understanding. This lack of commonality leads to a more precise use of language. The existence of these two codes has significant implications for schools.

Bernstein (2003) viewed the restricted code as a possible depressor of language skills, leading to an understanding of only concrete concepts and inhibiting higher level thinking. This would then impact academic performance. As Jones (2013) explained, the elaborated code is the language needed for success in school. It is language that is context independent and universalistic. This language type allows children to generalize knowledge and apply it to new situations. On the other hand, the restricted code is context dependent and particularistic; although it is easy to understand in the home for daily activities or in conversational use, it does not develop the language skills necessary to master academic language. MacLeod (2009) added to this explanation by arguing that the restricted code used by working-class children understands a common knowledge among the community, seeing the world as a communal "us." However, the language use of the middle and upper-class does not assume a common knowledge and is based on individualistic "me." As a result, the use of language is more linguistically explicit in the elaborated code. Because schools value the elaborated code over the restricted code, the academic performance of children is impacted based on their language exposure in the home. The sociolinguist Delpit looked at these two codes through a different light.

Delpit (2006) brought attention to the linguistic diversity that English-speaking children brought to American classrooms. She expressed the problem with the linguistic codes that exist in the culture of power, discussed earlier. Delpit argued that the difference between direct and indirect communication compounds the linguistic confusion for many children. When the language of the home is what Delpit referred to as direct commands (or arguably the restricted code described by Bernstein), the children hear directions such as, "Sit down!" However, the conflict lies when the linguistic code of the school uses indirect commands (closely linked to Bernstein's elaborated code) such as "Why don't you sit down?" Children accustomed to direct

commands view an indirect command as a choice, leading to disciplinary issues. Schools often fail to acknowledge that the language code of the school is different from the codes in some homes. As Delpit explained, many people who are not from the dominant culture ponder, “Why don’t those people say what they mean?” (p. 25). This is where the confusion lies for students in schools.

A teacher’s knowledge of different types of language codes can have immense impact in the classroom. Recognizing that language use differs by family and culture can help a teacher tailor the language they use in the classroom to make lessons more comprehensible for their students and open lines of communications that may otherwise be closed off. This is particularly true for ELLs whose both language and culture both differ from that of the dominant culture, putting them at even further disadvantage than those whose English falls under the restricted code or whose home language is dependent on direct commands.

Although there is not a direct link, one could argue that the restricted and elaborated codes theorized by Bernstein or direct and indirect language codes proposed by Delpit could be applied to second language learning. One such way would be through the two different sets of language skills that second language learners attain, as popularized by Jim Cummins.

Applications to Second-Language Learning

Cummins (1980) introduced the notion of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), or a child’s ability to hold a conversation with another person; and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), or the language necessary for literacy and academic understanding. While BICS is often referred to as playground language or conversational language, CALP is the set of academic language skills a second language learner must obtain to be successful in school. It is here where all three—Bernstein, Delpit, and Cummins—converge.

Since BICS refers only to skills needed to hold a conversation and has little impact on academic success, I would argue that in this limited sense, it is comparable to both Bernstein's restricted code and Delpit's direct commands. As Bernstein (2003) contended, "the abbreviated structures of a restricted code may be learned informally and readily" (p. 60). BICS takes significantly less time to attain than CALP, which would again align with the restricted code. Continuing with this comparison, since CALP is necessary for academic success, it would coordinate with Bernstein's elaborated code and Delpit's idea of indirect language. As Bernstein explained, an individual using elaborated code "comes to perceive language as a set of theoretical possibilities for the presentation of his discrete experience to others" (p. 104). This discrete experience relates to the specific academic vocabulary necessary to achieve CALP. By knowing which language level or code ELLs are currently using, teachers can better understand their needs. Once we acknowledge the different language levels, or linguistic codes, that exist among ELLs when they enter schools, we can help close the achievement gap.

Another problem occurring in schools is that too often, ELLs are viewed as handicapped by their level of English proficiency, rather than having their bilingualism be seen as an asset. Nieto and Bode (2008) explained that supporting students' native languages enhances, not hampers, their English language learning. This leads to the importance of a view of additive, not subtractive, bilingualism. One's native language should not be exchanged or replaced by English, but rather the two should coexist to support all learning and ensure that prior knowledge can be accessed.

It is not just a second language that is often seen as a deficit by schools but also non-standard forms of English that ELLs develop on their way to English proficiency. Gay (2018) argued that teachers often misconstrue the speaking of standard English as a precursor for

academic success. However, children who have strong foundations in their native language learn English faster than students who do not. When students have a limited foundation in their home language, they must not just learn the language (words) but also the concepts, making it twice as difficult. Since language and language codes are intimately linked to a child's family and community, children are negatively impacted when teachers or others imply that standard English is the only acceptable form of communication in a classroom.

One way to increase an understanding of the linguistic and cultural needs of students and their community is to hire teachers who live in or have previously attended the school district. Grow Your Own (GYO) teacher programs were designed for this very purpose.

"Grow Your Own" Teacher Programs

GYO teacher programs are on the rise to address the growing linguistic diversity in schools, enhance the understanding of ELLs, and address the shortage of teachers in bilingual education and special education. The GYO initiative began in Chicago, Illinois in the Logan Square neighborhood as a response to the scarcity of bilingual educators, the high turnover of teachers in high-need schools, and the lack of diversity amongst the teaching staff. The program then spread to other neighborhoods within Chicago (Skinner, 2011). While the initial program in Chicago partnered with a community-based organization to attract community members into teacher-education programs, GYO programs across the country are each enacted in their own way. The programs range from attracting community members, parents, paraprofessionals, and non-teaching staff in the school setting so that they can obtain teacher certification to encouraging middle and high school students to take classes that help steer them into teacher-education programs (Garcia et al., 2019; Gist et al., 2019; Hunter-Boykin, 1992; Skinner, 2011; Swanson, 2011). Attracting teachers who live in the neighborhood and understand the

community and students is one way to bridge the cultural divide between schools and the homes. Skinner explained the importance of having educators raised through GYO programs, "as teachers, they are culturally connected with the lives and the realities of the families with whom they work" (p. 164-165). Not only does the cultural connection matter regarding students, but the GYO programs appear to retain teachers, which benefits communities and schools. Gist et al. reported that despite the numerous barriers that prospective teachers in GYO programs face, retention rates of GYO graduates in schools remain high. In most GYO studies, the authors researched paraprofessionals who entered GYO programs, rather than high school students. Despite this fact, GYO programs present a positive way to attract bilingual and culturally competent teachers into communities with high concentrations of ELLs.

Conclusion

This history of the United States has always reflected the face of immigrants. However, the acceptance and expectations of these immigrants have varied over the years. As Reisch (2008) explained, at first immigrants were expected to assimilate to their new country, shedding the culture of their homelands to "become American." The concept of assimilation changed to a theory of a melting pot, where immigrants' cultures were fused with the American culture. More recently, the United States evolved into the idea of multiculturalism, where individuals are encouraged to retain their culture, language, and heritage while adding on these components of their new home. However, the literature demonstrated that, too often, schools still expect students to assimilate to the culture of the school rather than embrace the idea of multiculturalism. Students are expected to shed their skin of identity and put on the costume of the dominant culture, rather than retaining their cultural and linguistic identities. Forced assimilation is a contributing factor to the achievement gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs.

The literature also indicated the importance for teachers to develop a cultural understanding of their students. Unfortunately, the research revealed that few teachers feel comfortable teaching students who come from a culture different from their own. There is also, too often, a misperception that the only way to effectively educate students in American schools is to strip away their home culture and force the school culture upon that child. The same is true for language. Rather than adding English to an existing home language, teachers often believe that the home language must disappear to develop English-language proficiency. These misperceptions are often the result of a lack of cultural competence. Gay (2018) argued, "cultural diversity is a strength—a persistent, vitalizing force in our personal and civic lives" (p. 15). For schools to overcome the achievement gap existing between ELLs and non-ELLs, they must begin to view diversity as a gift, rather than a hindrance.

Gaps in the Literature

Although there have been numerous studies about developing cultural competence of pre-service teachers and the uncomfortableness of teachers with ELLs, it is clear through a review of the literature that there is very little research on how teachers develop cultural competence as in-service teachers, or even develop an understanding of the worldviews of others. When examining the relationship between place attachment and teaching, the gap in the literature grows even further. Although one French study examined place attachment to specific rooms within a school, it did not discuss bonds within the school or community (Rioux & Pignault, 2013). There does not appear to be current research on the influence place attachment has on the understanding of the worldviews of others. As a continuation of the previous statement, while there is a growing number of research studies on GYO teacher programs, most of the research is among community members and paraprofessionals entering these programs, rather than recent

graduates from the schools. There is limited research within the GYO programs exploring students who return to teach in schools they attended as children. Since these programs are current, there is little research available that explores how teachers in GYO programs develop an understanding of the worldviews of the changing population in their childhood schools. It is important to understand the interconnection between all three: worldview, place attachment, and the changing demographics resulting in multilingual classrooms, to help close the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the research methods I used to conduct a multimodal, hermeneutic phenomenological study exploring how topophilia and place attachment inform an educator's worldview and the understanding of the worldviews of others: "A worldview is like a path, for it paves the way for our journey through life" (Myers et al., 1991, pp. 56–57). It is only through exploring one's own worldview that individuals understand the lens in which they view the world. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the study uses multiple theoretical frameworks--SCT, introduced by Vygotsky (1978); topophilia coined by Tuan (1990); and the human geography theory of place attachment that is attributed to the work of Relph (1976). SCT explains how language is impacted by social and cultural experiences (Vygotsky, 1978) and how it helps form the lens by which we view the world. Whereas topophilia explores the emotions of the bond that teachers feel with their school environment (Tuan, 1990), place attachment further discusses this bond as an emotional attachment to a particular place, but not necessarily a location (Relph, 1976). I have argued that this combined theoretical framework allows us to better understand the lived experiences of educators who return to teach in schools they attended as children, where those once primarily monolingual schools have transformed into multilingual and multicultural environments.

As previously discussed, there is a great racial and cultural mismatch between teachers and their students on Long Island (NYSED 2019). Perhaps more critically, the growth of the ELL population on Long Island has changed the face and linguistic composition of public school classrooms. The increase in the ELL population on Long Island over the past 10 years (NYSED, 2020), of which 86% are Hispanic or Latino, has presented a challenge to many schools that historically have been primarily monolingual in population. This increasing linguistic diversity in

schools has led to vastly different academic performance on state exams and graduation rates between ELL and non-ELL students on Long Island (NYSED, 2020). The tremendous differences in the academic achievement between ELLs and non-ELLs is not the result of a single root cause, but rather a variety of contributing factors that add to an overall shortcoming in the education of ELLs.

Given the demographic imbalance between teachers and their students on Long Island, it is important to explore the role that cultural differences and varying worldviews play in the academic success of students. As discussed in previous chapters, cultural misunderstandings may be compounded when teachers return to schools that they previously attended as students, particularly when the student population has become more culturally and linguistically diverse. Although overall demographic changes may present schools with challenges, an increased number of ELLs offers an even greater dilemma for schools to contend with. As explained in the previous chapter, research has illuminated how inadequately prepared educators feel when teaching linguistically diverse students, as well as how rarely teachers understand the unique needs of their ELLs (Coady et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2010; Peercy et al., 2015; Polat, 2010; Song, 2016). The theoretical framework introduced earlier helps contextualize the problem that schools face with increasing linguistic diversity in their classrooms.

Although SCT will support teachers in comprehending how their own linguistic development was informed by social and cultural interaction, it will also enlighten them as to how social and cultural influences formed the linguistic identity of their students. In addition to SCT, nostalgia, place attachment, and topophilia may all affect the way in which teachers understand the perspectives of others. While nostalgia can be defined as “idealized memories that are situated in embittered experiences of the present” (Goodson et al., 2006, p. 44),

topophilia is explained as “the affective bond between people and place or setting” (Tuan, 1990, p. 4). Furthering this notion, place attachment suggests that “some places are associated with highly personal meanings” (Raymond et al., 2010, p. 423). As such, it is important to explore how teachers, in the unique circumstance of returning as educators to their childhood school districts, develop a sense of the worldview of others, while also trying to understand how the formation of their own worldview was influenced by their community and schooling.

Communities, schools, and families all serve as ways to socialize individuals into their worldview. As Tuan (1990) stated, “Natural environment and world view are closely related: world view, unless it is derived from an alien subculture, is necessarily constructed out of the salient elements of a people’s social and physical setting” (p. 79). Since individuals’ worldviews are formed in their communities, understanding the bond that exists between teachers and their schools and communities helps explain how their worldview has been influenced by their geography. It also leads to gaining greater insight into how these teachers develop a better understanding of the worldview of their students. Knowledge of one’s own worldview is the first step in the development of cultural competence (Ukpokodu, 2011). This particular study is unique because it is a multimodal qualitative examination of the influence place attachment and topophilia hold in the understanding of an educator’s own worldview and the worldviews of their students.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how topophilia and place attachment inform the worldview of K-12 educators on Long Island who have returned to teach in school districts they attended as children. It also examined how these teachers understand not only their own worldview but also the worldviews of others. For the purpose of this research,

topophilia is generally defined as the emotional response people experience in specific places (Tuan, 1990), which is similar to place attachment, or the emotional attachment between a person and place (Relph, 1976). Worldview is generally defined as the values and principles that form the lens in which people view their world (Myers et al., 1991). I explored the experiences of these teachers through semi-structured interviews, the examination of photos, and community tours. The following central question along with sub questions helped guide this phenomenological study: How do K-12 general educators who return to teach in schools they attended as children perceive how their communities and schools shaped their worldview?

1. How do teachers make meaning of the origins of their own worldviews and the worldviews of their students?
2. What role do place attachment and topophilia play in the understanding of the worldview of the 'other'?
3. How do educators describe the differences between their own school experience and the experiences of the students they teach?

Research Overview

This chapter explains the phenomenological methods of qualitative research used in my study. The purpose of phenomenological research is to describe a particular phenomenon through the lived experiences of its participants who have all experienced this unique phenomenon in their own way (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since phenomenological research generally uses interviews as the main source of data to help explain the phenomenon being examined, interviews were the main tool for my research. In addition to interviews, photos, videos, community tours, and research memos all helped uncover the lived experiences of the educators in my study.

In the following sections, I describe phenomenology in greater detail, the constructivist worldview that guides this research, the sample for the study, data-collection procedures, and the processes I deployed in coding and analyzing the data. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of strategies that were used to ensure reliability and validity, ethical issues, and the limitations the study presents.

Research Paradigm

In this qualitative study, I used a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to explore the lived experiences of the participant-educators who have returned to their childhood schools to teach. I aspired to understand how these teachers made meaning of the influence their communities and schools had in the formation of their own worldview and their awareness of the distinct worldviews of others. Phenomenology, in general, tries to understand the significance in the experiences of people who share a common ground (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Another description was offered by van Manen (2014):

> Phenomenology directs its gaze toward the regions where meanings and understandings originate, well up, and percolate through the porous membranes of past sedimentations—then infuse, permeate, infect, touch, stir us, and exercise a formative and affective effect on our being. (pp. 26-27)

In other words, phenomenology is the process of making sense of the experiences of people who have undergone a specific phenomenon. Although the participants explain their experiences in a raw, unprocessed, pre-reflective state, the researcher interprets the meaning of these experiences by setting aside preconceptions and judgments in order to analyze data without prejudice (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Although there are many types of phenomenology, this study uses a multimodal, hermeneutic phenomenological methodology.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a specific branch of phenomenological research, and it was utilized in this study for a variety of reasons. As described by Peoples (2021), hermeneutic phenomenology was introduced by Martin Heidegger. Unlike the work of Edmund Husserl, who asserted that all assumptions and biases on a topic should be bracketed, or set aside, Heidegger believed that there was no way that one's own experiences could be bracketed. He felt that people are unable to separate themselves from the world they live in. Furthermore, it is unlikely a person could act like a complete stranger in a strange land with regard to a research topic as Husserl suggested. I, like Heidegger, find it very difficult to bracket my experiences and act like a stranger through the research process. However, to limit bias in research, Heidegger proposed the use of hermeneutic circles, which describes the process of understanding of the phenomenon. Rather than bracketing biases, Heidegger suggested that our biases, understandings, and judgments on a topic could be revised. Through the revisionary process the researcher first looks at the whole to understand the parts, then looks at the parts to understand the whole (Peoples, 2021). For example, by first reading through transcripts of interviews, I was able to understand the themes or codes that arose. By examining the themes, I then understood the phenomenon as a whole. Hermeneutic phenomenology is also a reflection of my worldview.

Constructivist Worldview

My research comes from the worldview of constructivism, or an assumption that people try to make sense of the world they live in (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Constructivism is well suited for this phenomenological study because it arose from the philosophy of phenomenology and is intended to understand the human experience (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). It proposes that meaning is made in a social context, much like SCT theorizes that all language is social in its

essence. Although constructivism is not a theory, it does allow those holding this worldview to study social relations under the belief that "we would not be human but for our social relations" (Onuf, 2012, p. 3). Since the purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of educators returning to teach in their childhood districts, it is important to comprehend the historical and cultural aspects of these teachers' lives. It is these historical and cultural aspects that constructivists believe are essential to understanding others (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Constructivists hold several assumptions that guide them in their worldview. First, they believe that by engaging in the world, individuals make meaning of what is happening. They also assume that culture plays a major role in our understanding of the world because social and historical perspectives help us make sense of our lives. Finally, constructivists hold that we generate meaning of our world through interactions with others and that all meaning making is a social manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Onuf (2012) expressed a similar idea: "Constructivism holds that people make society and society makes people" (p. 4). This statement is especially true when studying the role that place attachment has in the development of one's worldview.

Role of the Researcher

I am currently an English as a New Language (ENL) teacher in a small Long Island school district. There is a wide variety of world languages spoken among the district's students and in their homes. This linguistic diversity presents an obstacle for many of the teachers I work with. However, as the research indicated earlier, this is common among many classroom educators.

Although my district's population is multicultural, the teaching staff, much like the rest of Long Island, is not. As ENL teachers, we receive training in understanding the culture and

worldviews of others. This instruction is interwoven into every class taken in a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program. However, this type of training does not exist for classroom teachers in the same way. Helping classroom teachers understand their students' culture and how that impacts their learning is difficult at times. While I attended a school district as a child where the teachers and students were diverse, most of the teaching staff I work with did not. As a student, I had the opportunity to attend a suburban school district where about a quarter of my teachers were Black and more than half of the students were not White. Being surrounded by people who were different from me allowed me to develop an understanding of different worldviews and develop a comfort level with people who were of different races and cultures. Without the intimate daily contact with many cultures from preschool through 12th grade, I would not have acquired the appreciation for diversity or understanding of other worldviews that I currently hold.

Oftentimes helping my colleagues see the world through the lens of their students is challenging. In addition to the lack of diversity among the staff, many of the teachers who are currently employed in my district also attended this suburban district as children. However, when they attended the district, the district was primarily White, Judeo-Christian, middle-class, and English-speaking. Currently in the district, less than 20% of the students are White, almost 10% of the students are ELLs, and more than 40% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged (NYSED, 2020). In my school alone, more than 60% of the students have a language other than English spoken in the home. The shift in demographics to a multilingual, multireligious, and multicultural population has led the teachers to question how to make sense of these changes. They questioned why we should be getting Eid off as a holiday and how to communicate with parents who do not speak English. They blame academic failures of students

on what they perceive as parents who cannot or do not help their children. While the many discussions described above took place, I began to ponder if the memories the teachers had as children clouded their vision and affected their ability to understand the students who are now sitting in their classes. This led me to want to further investigate this phenomenon.

How a teacher's past impacts their current and future teaching became of increasing interest to me, which led to the current study. I did not conduct 'backyard research,' or research among my friends, colleagues, or within my workplace, due to the fact that it would have compromised the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure that my research was reflexive, I took notes during the process about my personal experiences and acknowledged how these events helped form the lens in which I interpreted the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I conducted the study in sites where I do not have connections to the participants in order to ensure objectiveness and valid results.

Procedures

Through the lens of constructivism and the methodology of phenomenology, I explored the role that place attachment and topophilia had in the development of educators' worldviews and their understanding of the worldviews of their students. Due to my own personal life experiences, this subject is of particular interest to me. The next section further illuminates those interests as well as provides further detail regarding the selection of participants, sites, data collection, and data-analysis procedures.

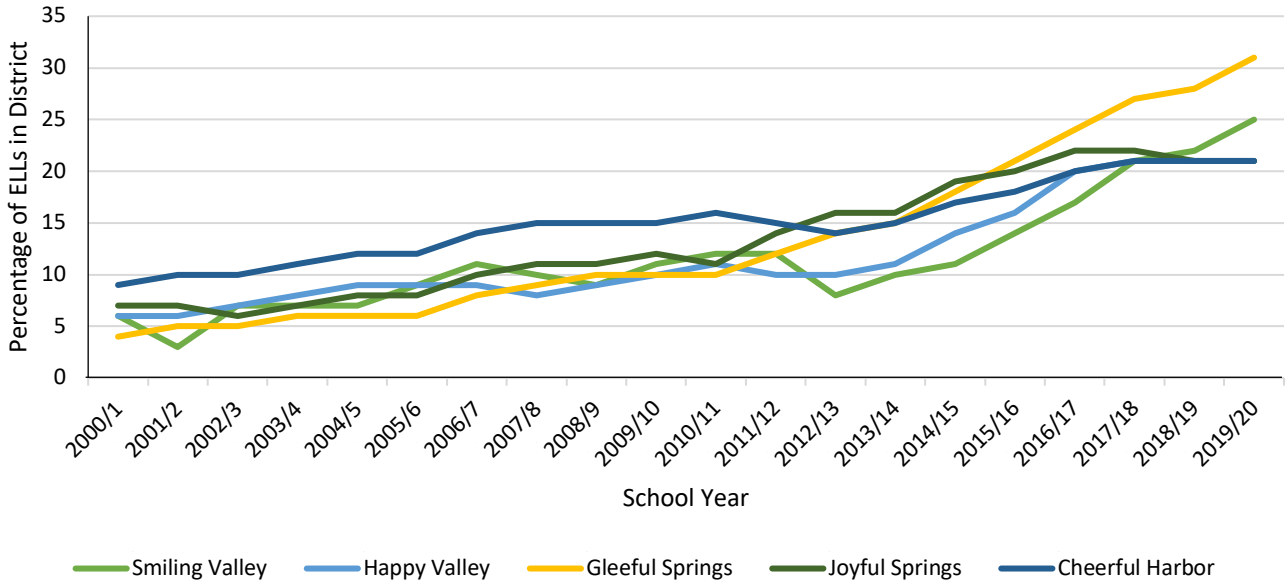
Participants and Sites

The seven participants in this study were all K-12 educators who have returned to teach in school districts they attended as children. Five of the participants were elementary teachers, one was a middle school teacher, and one was a high school teacher. Through this

phenomenological study, I interviewed seven participants who met the aforementioned criteria but who were also currently teaching in five districts: Cheerful Harbor, Gleeful Springs, Happy Valley, Joyful Springs, and Smiling Valley. Originally, only three districts were selected, but due to a lack of participants, the study was expanded to include Joyful Springs and Cheerful Harbor. The five selected districts have been chosen because they have undergone a demographic shift from a primarily monolingual English-speaking population to one of greater linguistic diversity over the past 20 years. The original three school districts had approximately 1 in 16 students who were ELLs 20 years ago, increasing to approximately 1 in 10 students ten years ago, and now, they have greater than 1in 5. The two added districts have a similar upward trajectory of ELLs, but not to the same extreme (NYSED, 2020). The primary home language of the ELLs in all five districts was Spanish, representing over 90% of the students' linguistic backgrounds (NYSED, 2020). For the purpose of this study, it was important to find locations where educators, while attending as students, had limited or no interaction with ELLs, but now that they are teachers, are in daily contact with ELLs. The increase in the ELL population in the five districts is demonstrated in Figure 3.1. The diversity of languages spoken by these ELLs is shown in Table 3.1. An eighth participant in a sixth school district participated in the first interview, but subsequently dropped out of the study due to a lack of time on her part.

Figure 3.1

Changes in the ELL Population from 2000-2020



Source. *New York State Data*, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

Table 3.1

Students' Top Home Languages Other Than English

District	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Cheerful Harbor	Spanish	Haitian Creole	Arabic	French
Gleeful Springs	Spanish	Polish	Ukrainian	Turkish
Happy Valley	Spanish	Tagalog	Russian	N/A
Joyful Springs	Spanish	Miscellaneous	Haitian Creole	Italian
Smiling Valley	Spanish	French	Turkish	N/A

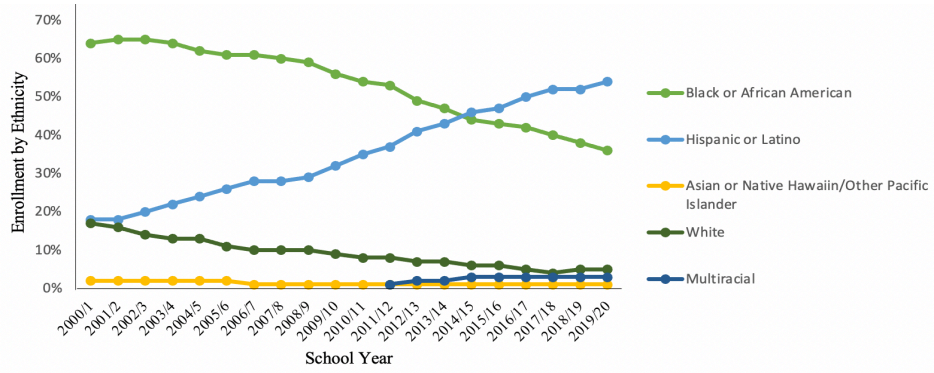
Source. *New York State Data*, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

In addition to the increase in ELLs, there was also a shift in the overall demographics across all five districts. Since the 2000-2001 school year, three of the districts have shifted from

majority White districts to majority Hispanic or Latino, while the other two have shifted from majority Black to majority Hispanic or Latino. The increase in the Latinx population reflects the linguistic shift in the districts from a primarily English-speaking population to that of a mix of English and Spanish. The changing demographics are illustrated in Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6.

Figure 3.2

Changes in Demographics in Cheerful Harbor School District

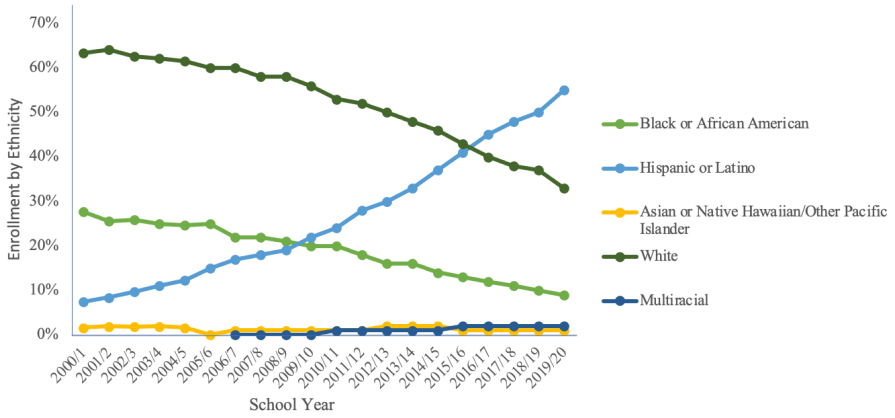


Note. Native American students consisted of less than 1% of the population and thus were excluded. Data on multiracial students only began to be reported in the 2006/2007 school year.

Source. New York State Data, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

Figure 3.3

Changes in Demographics in Gleeful Springs School District

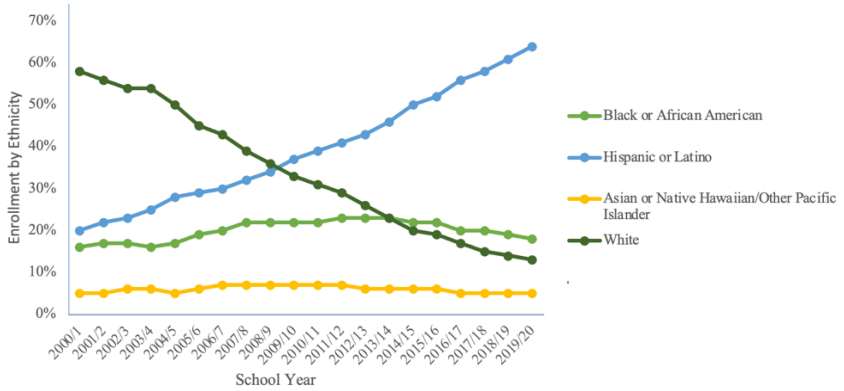


Note. Native American students consisted of less than 1% of the population and thus were excluded. Data on multiracial students only began to be reported in the 2006/2007 school year.

Source. New York State Data, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

Figure 3.4

Changes in Demographics in the Happy Valley School District

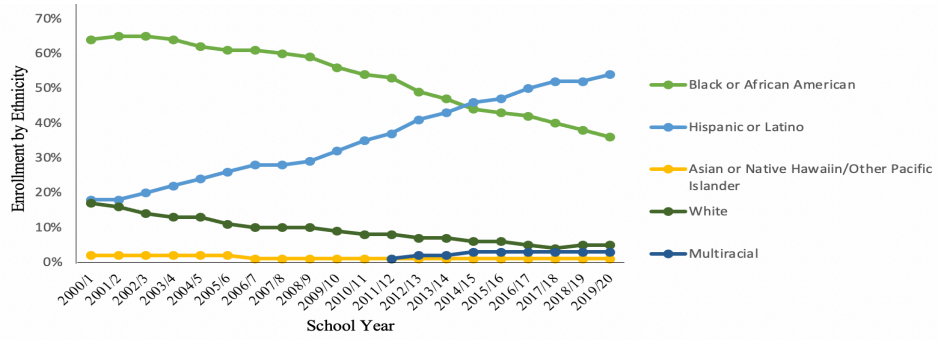


Note. Native American and multiracial students consisted of 1% or less of the population and thus were excluded.

Source. New York State Data, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

Figure 3.5

Changes in Demographics in Joyful Springs School District

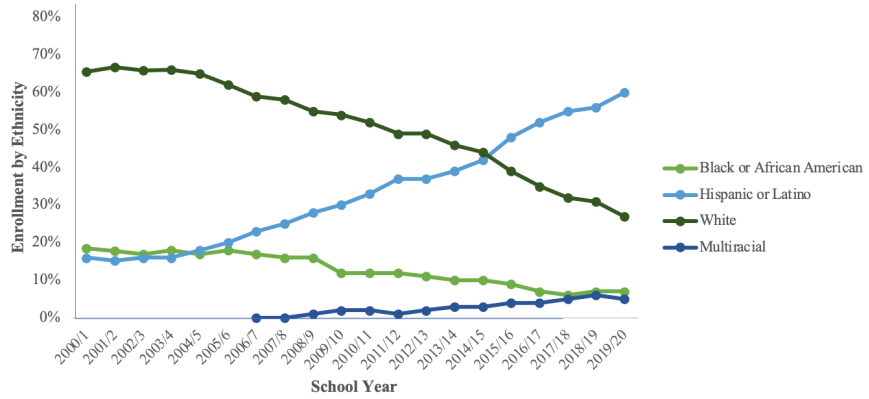


Note. Native American students consisted of less than 1% of the population and thus were excluded. Data on multiracial students only began to be reported in the 2006/2007 school year.

Source. New York State Data, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

Figure 3.6

Changes in Demographics in the Smiling Valley School District



Note. Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander and Native American students consisted of 1% or less of the population and thus were excluded. Data on multiracial students only began to be reported in the 2006/2007 school year.

Source. New York State Data, by New York State Education Department, 2020 (https://data.nysed.gov/).

All five school districts differ in size (NYSED, 2020). Cheerful Harbor is the largest district in population reporting approximately 6,700 students, followed by Gleeful Springs with a population of approximately 5,500 students. The two middle-sized districts were Joyful Springs and Happy Valley with a population of approximately 2,800 and 2,300, students respectively. Smiling Valley is the smallest district, with approximately 600 students (NYSED, 2020). The variation in size of the districts did not impact the examination of the phenomenon.

Data Collection

To complete this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I needed to collect various forms of data. As van Manen (1990) stated "the aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experiences into a textual expression of its essence" (p. 36). To achieve this textual expression, I engaged in a variety of activities and data-collection techniques. Through in-depth interviews, I began to gain an understanding of the lived experience of the educator participants. In addition, I examined their sense of place attachment as well as understanding of their own worldview and that of their students, which includes any awareness of how their worldview might impact their understanding of others. Using the medium of Photovoice, discussed in greater detail below, I evoked memories of the past and perceptions of the present. Lastly, with the utilization of community tours, I gained a greater understanding of the community and family socialization that has led to their identities as teachers as well as how that impacted their understanding of others. All these data collection approaches are described in greater depth in the following section.

Interviews

First and foremost, semi-structured interviews were conducted. As Padilla-Diaz (2015) stated, "the most appropriate data collection strategy for phenomenological research is the

profound interview" (p. 104). Semi-structured interviewing of the participants ensured that all topics relevant to my research were covered, while also allowing participants to share other information or stories that added to my understanding of their lived experiences (Peoples, 2021). According to Seidman (2013), phenomenological interviewing looks at the experiences of participants and the meanings that they make of those experiences. This type of questioning allows the researcher to understand the experience from the participants' point-of-view, while also acknowledging that it is impossible to fully understand their experience: "To do so would mean that we had entered into the other's stream of consciousness and experienced what he or she had experienced. If we would do that, we would be that other person" (Seidman, 2013, p. 17). Although the interviews did not allow me to develop a complete knowledge of a phenomenon that I have not directly experienced, it provided a general understanding.

I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant to develop a full understanding of each participant's lived experience. Each interview, while remaining semi-structured, took on a different format. The interviews were spaced three to six weeks apart, depending on participant availability. The three interviews progressed from a standard interview, to one that evoked memories through photos, to the final interview that made meaning of memories from the community through a community tour.

The three-interview process is essential in phenomenological research as "it allows both the interviewer and participant to explore the participant's experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning" (Seidman, 2013, p. 20). The first interview allows the researcher, as Seidman described, to contextualize the participant's experience. It shed insight into their past and present experiences in the schools in which they teach and the attachment and bond they feel with their district. However, for this study, standard oral interviews alone were not enough to

accurately understand the bond that participants had with their districts. Therefore, the second interview combined a modified Photovoice technique with follow-up interview questions which evoked memories through photos. This allowed me to clarify any missing information or gaps in the data from the first interview (Peoples, 2021), while it also allowed me to evoke memories of the past with photos, news articles, and yearbooks. Photos from the present were used to fully understand how the educators interpreted the changes in the districts. The final interview elicited a reflection of the teachers' worldview formation during a community tour. While five participants chose a driving tour; one chose a walking tour; and one chose a walking tour through her school, followed by a drive through the community. The purpose of this third interview is a result of the fact that "making sense or making meaning requires that participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation" (Seidman, 2013, p. 22). As the participants showed me the community that formed who they are, I asked questions that led to a reflection upon how the community shaped their worldview, impacted who they are as teachers today, and affected their feelings toward any changes that have taken place within the community.

Photovoice

The use of photos, past and present, allowed me to see the schools through the participants eyes. As Boden et al. (2019) stated, "visual images tap into several sensory registers at once and can be rich with meaning" (p. 220). Taking this need to use many sensory registers, I asked the participants to bring photos they had of their childhood along with those they have of their present-day teaching. When it was possible, they also brought yearbooks, awards, and newspaper clippings. Hearing the participants describe the photos, especially those of the past,

permitted me to understand the extent of their place attachment and topophilia. The photos brought up a sense of nostalgia and flooded their mind with memories.

The technique of Photovoice allows participants to interpret and construct meaning from photos. As such, I was able to take a deep-dive into their memories of the past and their interpretations of the present. As Liebenberg (2018) argued, "Images prompt a different kind of reflection on lived experiences…images are able to prompt emotions and thoughts about experiences in ways that narrative alone cannot" (p. 4). The photos allowed the participants to reflect upon the image's experience in a deeper way than interview questions alone would have permitted, leading to a more profound understanding of the meaning attached to each event (Liebenberg, 2018). Although Wang and Burris (1997) introduced the technique of Photovoice as a way to determine the needs of communities through a participatory-needs assessment, I utilized it as a means to evoke the memories of my participants. Whereas Wang and Burris gave cameras to their participants to record problems in the community, I used photos taken in the past, provided by participants, along with those from the present, to understand the bond and attachment that the participants associated with their schools. The manner in which the participants described the photos helped me enter their lived experience in a way that the oral interviews alone did not permit.

Community Tours

One final source of data was community tours. While interviews and photos gave me insight into the participants' personal histories, walking and driving through the community gave me a sense of how their socialization in the community helped form their worldviews and their understanding of others. In his own literary memory walk of New York City, Whitehead (2003) stated, "You are a New Yorker when what was there before is more real and solid than what is

here now. You start building your private New York the first time you lay eyes on it" (p. 4). In that statement, New York could easily be replaced by any community, school, village, or hamlet. It is this private reality of the communities my participants were raised in that I explored through the community tours. This third semi-structured interview took place as we toured through the community. As this footage was recorded on a GoPro camera for both audio and visual documentation, I gained data on the self-reflection that teachers made regarding how their childhood communities shaped who they are today: "Visual methods seem to disrupt participants' rehearsed narratives allowing multiplicity to surface more readily" (Boden et al., 2019, p. 221). Thus, by driving or walking and discussing the surroundings, the participants were better able to explain their lived experience from a raw, natural place, rather than a rehearsed speech.

As Evans and Jones (2011) argued, walking interviews yield more in-depth data because participants are more easily able to make connections to, meaning of, and provide knowledge of the surrounding environment. It is this meaning and connection that generated greater reflection upon how the community formed the participants' lives and how it shaped their worldview. While only two interviews involved a walking tour, and the others were driving tours, the driving tours provided the same connections and meaning making that the walking tours did.

Data Analysis

Although traditional qualitative coding "is a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data," (Saldana, 2013, p. 3), this method is not always compatible with phenomenological studies. As van Manen (2014) argued "codifications, conceptual abstractions, or empirical generalizations can never adequately produce phenomenological understandings and

insights" (p. 319). Kuntz (2015) supported this argument by stating that traditional coding methods attempt to "purify by breaking down" (p. 101). However, he felt these traditional methods point to an experience of the researcher, rather than the actual experience the participants are describing. As such, while I initially coded using one word or a short phrase in the qualitative data analysis app Dedoose, it became apparent that traditional coding did not adequately reflect the participants' lived experiences in this study. Therefore, I organized the data into themes and subthemes reflected in complete sentences.

Thematic Analysis

According to van Manen (2014), "thematic analysis refers to the process of recovering structures of meanings that are embodied and dramatized in human experience represented in a text" (p. 319). He continued to describe three different approaches to thematic analysis: the wholistic reading approach, the selective reading approach, and the detailed reading approach. In other words, you can look at the whole to understand the parts and then look at the parts to understand the whole so that the lived experiences of the participants are fully understood. Regarding the study at hand, I utilized the detailed reading approach initially to develop themes within small parts of the interview transcripts and then utilized the wholistic reading approach by looking at the transcripts as a whole to develop the overarching themes and subthemes. The same approach was taken for the video and photo data. Each individual part was analyzed, and then overall themes were based on the data as a whole. The three sources of data—the interview transcripts, the photos, and the videos—were then analyzed together to develop themes that reflected the data presented. As Saldana (2013) explained about thematic analysis, themes cannot be incomplete phrases or simple one-word categories, they must be complete thoughts, incorporated into complete sentences to make sense of the participants' experiences.

The data collected through interviews, Photovoice, and community walks were analyzed through a systematic process. Since I used a multimodal approach, the data had to be analyzed beyond just spoken language. As in any phenomenological study, the first interview transcripts were coded through a combination of the software program Dedoose along with hand coding to ensure completeness. Second, the Photovoice transcripts (Interview Two) underwent the same coding procedure, first through Dedoose and second through hand coding. Next, I used the transcript of the walking interview (Interview Three) to code first through Dedoose and second through hand coding. Along with the transcript for the community tour interview, I also used my own field memo notes as a form of reflection of my own observations of our tour. "Both writing and creating visual narratives allow for phenomenological reflection, as they require the researcher to distance him- or herself from immediate involvement with objects in the lifeworld" (Kirova & Emme, 2006, p. 8). As Kirova and Emme explained, there are oral and visual literacies that both communicate ideas and create meaning. Therefore, the visual imagery must undergo its own form of analysis.

The introduction of both still and moving images, along with verbal transcripts, required analyzing the data from both the Photovoice interview and the community walk to have an added layer of interpretation. As Boden and Eatough (2014) discussed, the images and the verbal transcripts must be analyzed separately. Analyzing the images provides copious data, as much or more than verbal transcripts. As Boden and Eatough argued, multimodal approaches to research are used to understand the richness of the human experience and therefore, the visual elements will add a richness to the description that oral language alone will not. Through the encoding of the photos used during the Photovoice, I uncovered themes that match the themes in the transcripts. While the photos cannot be published due to confidentiality, descriptions of the

photos are provided in Chapter 4, along with the portions of the transcripts that discuss the photos.

Regarding the community tours, I triangulated the data of the moving video, the thematic text that emerged from the spoken language of this third interview, and the data from previous interviews and photos. This led to a second triangulation process in which I explored the data from three sources (video, photos, and interview) to justify the themes that emerged, adding validity to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The videos, much like the photos, cannot be published to maintain confidentiality. However, the contents of the videos are described, along with the oral data from the interviews that support the images, in Chapter 4.

Throughout the data-analysis process, I kept memos of the data I was examining and my personal reflections. As Peoples (2021) argued, memos help researchers keep track of their personal reactions to the analyzed data. All data sources were read and reread to ensure that nothing was overlooked. In addition, I utilized periods of what Peoples called 'active passivity.' As van Manen (2014) described, "activity and passivity are inextricably entwined…Inceptive insights, just as poetic words, cannot always be forced" (p. 354). In other words, I built in periods where I took a step back from analyzing the data so that I could evaluate it with a fresh set of eyes. This allowed me to see any nuances that I may have missed if I were constantly submerged in the data.

Reliability, Validity, and the Parallel Criteria

Reliability and validity are essential in quantitative research but are not the best terms to describe the results of a qualitative study. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), although trustworthiness is frequently used to monitor the results of a qualitative study, there is another way to measure the quality of qualitative research called the 'parallel criteria.' The first aspect of

the parallel criteria is most closely aligned with validity and is entitled credibility, which refers to ability of the research to connect the constructed realities of participants and the researcher's ability to represent those realities in an accurate way. Guba and Lincoln (1989) offered several ways to ensure credibility that I utilized in my data analysis and collection including: prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity, and transcription checks of the interviews for accuracy. I interacted with the participants for a series of three interviews in three different contexts in order to "overcome the effects of misinformation, distortion, or the presented "fronts," to establish the rapport and build the trust necessary to uncover construction" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These three interviews constituted prolonged engagement to ensure credibility.

Regarding peer debriefing, I sent my work to an impartial colleague to help 'test out' my findings, to question the research process, and help me think through the next steps of my study. To achieve progressive subjectivity, I produced a memo of expected findings, which was archived, followed by a memo of the constructed findings. By reviewing the two—if my expected findings overtook the constructed findings—I would have realized that I am not listening to or making new meaning of the participants' lived experiences. However, this did not happen. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed using the transcription service Rev. After I received the transcriptions, I played the interviews while reading the transcripts to ensure that I was accurately presenting participants' own language and ideas.

The second aspect of the parallel criteria is transferability. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), transferability refers to the ability to generalize the research to a new situation. In qualitative research the investigator must create the claimed generalizability, while the reader constructs the transferability. To foster this transferability, I utilized 'thick description' in my work which chronicled the time, place, context, and culture in which my themes emerged.

The third facet of the parallel criteria is most closely aligned with the quantitative feature of reliability. As Guba and Lincoln (1989) discussed, dependability refers to the stability of the data collected over a period of time. To ensure dependability, I conducted a dependability audit. This audit demonstrated any changes I had made to the methods over time and explained why those changes had been made. The only change to my methods was the switch from a planned community walk to a community tour, with a walking or driving option available to the participants. This was because the participants felt that the area they wanted to cover with the community tours was too far to effectively walk. In addition, one participant was concerned about safety in one of the areas she wanted to tour.

The final aspect of the parallel criteria is confirmability. As Guba and Lincoln (1989) explained, confirmability is similar to objectivity in quantitative research. Confirmability refers to the ability of the research to demonstrate that the data and the data analysis are representations of the experiences of the participants and not "figments of the evaluator's imagination" (p. 243). To do this, I engaged in a confirmability audit. A peer reviewer examined both my raw data and my interpretations of the data to ensure that the quality of the study was maintained.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. As is common in any phenomenological study, the small sample size is a limitation and therefore may make the results less generalizable (Peoples, 2021). Another limitation I expected was the lack of racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity among the participants. This limitation would have been a result of two separate issues. First, as stated earlier, 90% of Long Island teachers are White (NYSED, 2019), so the probability that the participants would have been White was great. Second, the original three districts chosen as sites for research were majority-White districts prior to 2004, when the anticipated

participants would have attended (NYSED, 2020). However, this was not the case in my study. In fact, it was the opposite, presenting a new limitation. The participants in this study do not reflect the demographics of the teaching staff on Long Island. Only 57% of the participants were monolingual English speakers and White; the other 43% were Latina and Afro-Latina and were bilingual.

Another limitation was the reliance of the memory of the participants and archival data to evoke visions of the past. Sometimes memories can be fuzzy or fade away and, as a result, I was afraid the memories may have impacted my ability to truly understand their lived experiences. However, the use of photos and community tours seemed to elicit vivid memories in a way that traditional interviews may not have.

The final limitation was the attraction of certain educators to the study, while others chose not to participate. It seemed that participation was dependent on the teachers' personalities and worldviews, limiting the range of data collected. Although educators in the original three sites tried to recruit other participants, only one was successful in rounding up a fellow teacher. As a result, I needed to extend my study to two other districts, where the ELL population had also blossomed over the past 20 years, but not to the extent of the original three sites.

Despite my limitations, through my data-collection techniques (photos, community walk, and purposeful questioning) and data analysis, I believe I successfully overcame the limitation of memory reliance. Although the diversity of the participants may be at odds with the actual teaching population on Long Island, the heterogeneity of the educators provided a greater variety of experiences, enriching the study. The diversity of the teachers, along with the depth of the data collection, helped overcome some aspects of the small sample size.

Ethical Considerations

I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for my study (Appendix A). In my view, the study had minimal ethical risks. Since the participants were volunteers and coercion was not involved, there was no harm to the participants. Since pseudonyms were used for the school districts, villages, and the participants, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. In addition, specific numerical data that would help identify the communities or school districts were rounded to help maintain anonymity. Any photos or videos used in the data analysis were destroyed, following the successful defense of the dissertation. Some data from the interviews were paraphrased in place of direct quotes, or replaced with generic language, if the language used was particularly identifiable to an individual.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the qualitative methods for my multimodal hermeneutic phenomenological study. I explored the role that place attachment and topophilia play in the formation of educators' worldviews and their understanding of the worldviews of others when they return to their childhood schools to teach. In particular, I explored school districts where there has been a dramatic change in the linguistic diversity of the students over the past 20 years. As previously discussed, while the overall population of Long Island public schools has decreased by over 20,000 students since 2012, the number of ELLs has increased by over 13,000, of which 86% speak Spanish (NYSED, 2020). The challenges presented by the changing linguistic composition of suburban classrooms was explored earlier. Taking this into consideration, the significance of this study was to increase the understanding of how teachers' worldviews are formed and shaped by their school and community and how this influences their ability to recognize and understand others' worldviews. Since understanding one's own

worldview and recognizing that others hold different worldviews is the first step in developing cultural competence, exploring the socialization of teachers through their schools and communities is significant in understanding how to train more culturally competent teachers for linguistically diverse learners. Through this study's three semi-structured interviews, I utilized the questioning techniques of Seidman (2013) in three different ways: traditional oral interview, Photovoice, and community tour. Using the data-analysis procedures previously discussed, I uncovered themes supported by data. I hope these themes will lead to a greater understanding of how teachers' worldviews are formed and influenced by place attachment and how this understanding can lead to a greater awareness of the worldviews of their students, ideally bridging the gap between the two to enhance their understanding of each other.

Chapter 4: Findings

As previously discussed, place attachment suggests that bonds formed with places are often as strong as the bonds people create with one another. “Spaces and places are full with meaning; they have an order and a sense that can be experienced directly, yet which is infinitely variable” (Relph, 1976, p. 18). The direct experience with spaces and places is what I examined in this study, along with the bonds that were created as a response to lived experiences within those spaces. As explained in Chapter 3, I used a multimodal approach to truly understand the phenomenon of place attachment, teachers, and changing places. The approach included interviews, exploration of photos, and community tours. Specifically, the use of photos and community tours helped tap into sensory elements of the past and present which interviews alone would not have permitted. Moreover, through the use of photos and community tours “all of these memories come rushing like feral waves to your mind” (The Airborne Toxic Event, 2008). I was able to see the flooding of memories as the participants discussed what was happening in the photos, or the places visited on the community tours, which helped portray their lived experiences as educators returning to their childhood school districts.

In the following sections, I discuss more fully the participants and communities in the study and the thematic analysis of the data, including narrative data from the interviews. The narrative data help reveal the results of the study, which illuminate how educators who returned to their childhood school districts formed bonds with their schools and communities. In addition, I portray how those bonds informed their worldview and allowed for the greater understanding of the worldviews of others. I also illuminate the challenges these teachers face when there are changes in both their school and community and how that affects their bonds with the two.

Participants

The seven participants in this study were all female educators who returned to teach in school districts they had previously attended as children. They all live on Long Island, New York. These five school districts were chosen for this study due to the dramatic growth in English language learners (ELLs) within those districts over the past 20 years, as demonstrated in Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3. All seven participants worked in a school district where the primary home language of the ELLs within the district was Spanish (NYSED, 2020). Four of the participants were White, two were Latina, and one was Afro-Latina. Five of the participants taught in an elementary school, of which two taught kindergarten, one taught second grade, and one was a math intervention specialist. The two remaining teachers were both special education teachers, one in a middle school and the other high school. One teacher reported that she had gone back to school for TESOL, but the district is unaware of her additional certification. All seven educators had ELL clusters in their classes, meaning that an ENL teacher pushed into their classroom for one period every day, or some of their students were pulled out for additional ENL services. Three of the educators were bilingual, speaking both English and Spanish. The teachers' experience in the classroom ranged from novice to veteran. Six of the participants continue to live within the school districts they grew up in, while one resides in a nearby community. Table 4.1 provides a visual representation of the participants' backgrounds, along with the pseudonyms assigned to both the participants and the districts. To maintain anonymity for both the participants and school districts, I used pseudonyms.

Table 4.1

Overview of Participants

Participant	District	Bilingual	Race	Years of Experience	School Level
Brianna	Cheerful Harbor	Yes	Afro-Latina	<10	Middle School
Gloria	Joyful Springs	Yes	Latina	<5	Elementary
Jane	Smiling Valley	No	White	>20	High School
Mary	Happy Valley	No	White	>30	Elementary
Michelle	Gleeful Springs	No	White	>20	Elementary
Sally	Joyful Springs	Yes	Latina	>20	Elementary
Suzy	Gleeful Springs	No	White	>30	Elementary

Although it is important to understand who the participants are, so is a description of the communities in which they live. Since the communities were the places in which the participants' worldviews and lives were molded and where everlasting bonds were formed, they serve an equally important component of identity as the participants themselves. As such, in the following section I provide a brief description of the uniqueness of each community.

Communities

The five communities represented in this study are all located on Long Island, ranging from western Nassau County to eastern Suffolk County. They vary in size, population, location, and setting. To understand the participants' bonds with their communities, it is important to first paint a picture of the communities themselves.

Happy Valley

Happy Valley is a community that has undergone immense changes over the past 20 years. The public school population has decreased by a staggering 40%[2] between 1998 and 2020. The decline is largely the result of a large religious population that chooses to send their children

[2] Data in the communities section are rounded to help districts maintain their anonymity.

to non-secular schools rather than the local public schools. As a result, the district has had to sell off several of the public schools, some of which have been turned into condos, while others have been converted into religious schools. Only 20% of the children under the age of 18 living within Happy Valley attend public schools (Census Reporter, 2020). The disconnect between the people who live in the community and the school itself was clearly articulated by Mary, who teaches there. Another contrast between the school and the community is the wealth factor. While only 10% of the children in the community are reported to be living in poverty (Census Reporter, 2020), 80% of the students in the public school district are considered to be economically disadvantaged (NYSED, 2020). During the community tour with Mary, she described that when she grew up in Happy Valley there was previously a large Italian population. The Italian population has been replaced by a large religious population, converting what had been considered community institutions to religious buildings. Through our community tour, the vast differences in the housing of the people within the community became apparent. There were homes being knocked down and rebuilt into what could be considered mansions right next to homes that were falling down and looked unsafe to live in. Mary explained throughout the tour that she did not even recognize the community she once called home.

Smiling Valley

Smiling Valley is a district and community that is often combined with smaller surrounding hamlets. According to Jane, Smiling Valley had been a community dependent on the coastal waters and farming. It had been the home to several ship-building and dock-building companies, as well as a haven for fishermen. Many of the farms that had once been in the area have been sold off to make homes or have been converted to vineyards. There is only one working shipyard left and the cost of fuel has left many of the fishing boats to remain docked.

The community is considered a small town where everyone knows each other. It is also a place where many city-folk come out on the weekend or for the summer to seek haven. The money that the weekenders and summer vacationers spend, according to Jane, has begun to create a divide in the community. As a result, many of the locals can no longer afford to live in the community where they have spent their entire lives. From a retail perspective, many local businesses now cater to tourists, pricing out the locals. For example, while the median house price is over $550,000, the median income for the year-round residents is approximately $60,000 a year (Census Reporter, 2020). While the population of the student body within the school district has remained mostly stable over the past 20 years, the introduction of a universal pre-K program has caused a bit of overcrowding within the school. As a result, the school, a pre-K through 12 building, is currently undergoing major construction. According to Jane, she is trying to come to terms with the revitalization of her community and what that signifies to the locals.

Gleeful Springs

Gleeful Springs represents the largest community in area and the second largest in terms of population of the school districts in this study. Both Michelle and Suzy referred to it as a rural area, where farming had been the primary industry, but development and the transformation of farms to homes, commercial buildings, golf courses, and vineyards has changed the look and feel of the community. According to Michelle and Suzy, the conversion of farmland to housing and the development of the downtown area, including many apartment buildings, has caused severe overcrowding within the schools. Gleeful Springs is another community that has many summer visitors, including housing that is open only during the summer season due to the lack of heating in the structures. Gleeful Springs is also a community in which the waterfront has played a major role in the lives of the people living there. Unlike Smiling Valley, the people who come out

during the summer do not have large amounts of money to transform the feel of the community; as such the restaurants and stores remain affordable for the year-round residents. It is also the community in this study that has the largest percentage of children living in poverty (Census Reporter 2020).

Joyful Springs

Joyful Springs represents a community and school district that has always been diverse. However, according to Sally, now, more than ever, the White families are choosing to send their children to private schools rather than the local public schools. While 40% of the community in which the school district is located is White, only 5% of the school population is White. Through the community tour, Sally pointed out the areas that are still primarily White; those that had been mostly Black, which are now a mix of Black and Latinx; and those areas that are a mix of all races. Sally described the center of town as the area where community members of all races would come out and celebrate. Although it is another community that is located on the bay, the water does not seem to play as important a role as it does in Smiling Valley.

Cheerful Harbor

Cheerful Harbor is the only community that is not located near a body of water. It is a community that had once been mostly Black and now has a large Latinx population. There is a large immigrant population as is demonstrated by the fact that 40% of the community was born outside of the United States (Census Reporter 2020). According to Brianna, other than the demographic changes, not much else has changed in the community. All of the pizzerias, delis, and restaurants that Brianna had visited as a child are still open and run by the same families. The community has several small parks, which once served as a place for high school and middle school students to hang out after school. However, during the community tour, the parks seemed

full of families with young children enjoying the playgrounds, rather than the older students Brianna described. The community that makes up the school population represents three separate villages, but there is very little to delineate one village from the next, as they all seem to blend into one. The school district is the largest in terms of student enrollment in this study. Brianna reported that while the community is still family oriented, the notion that neighbors all know their neighbors has diminished as the families who had lived in the community for a long time moved away.

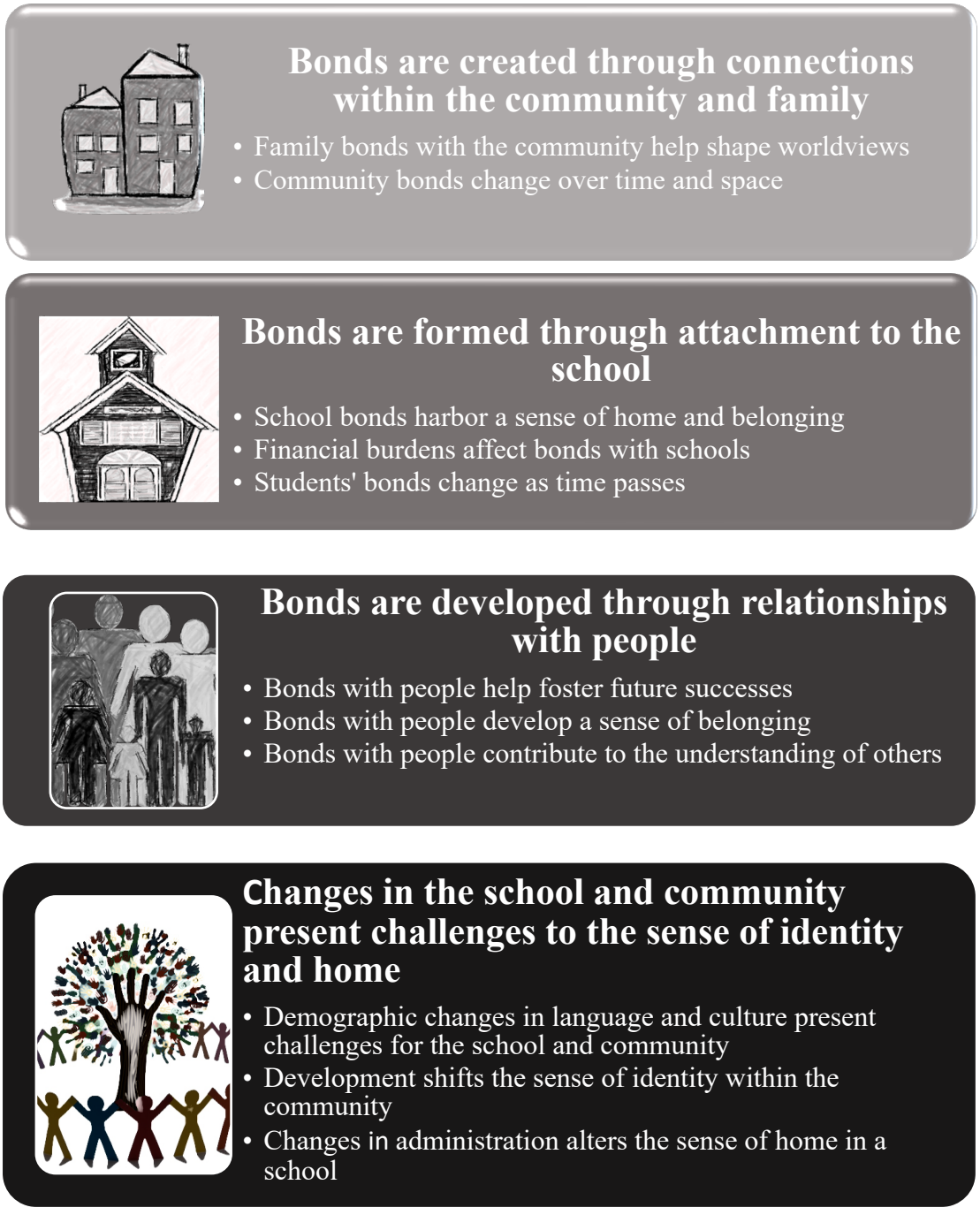
In summation, each of the five communities is distinct, but the large number of Spanish-speaking families is a common thread. Moreover, the uniqueness of each community is what has attracted the participants to stay, or in one case, move away. Since the communities and school districts in this study have helped mold the participants in terms of the way they view the world they live in, the communities and districts are an essential part of this study. Therefore, having a greater understanding of the participants and their communities, informed the subsequent analysis.

Analyzing the Data

As discussed in Chapter 3, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis to best portray the participants' lived experiences. While the coding in Dedoose was initially completed through one-word codes or short phrases, those were transformed into themes and subthemes written in complete sentences. One-word codes and short phrases were not sufficient to reflect the study at hand. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the themes and subthemes that arose through the data analysis process.

Figure 4.1

Thematic Analysis



The following sections take a deep-dive into each theme and subtheme uncovered during the thematic analysis. Excerpts from the interviews are given to support the themes as well as descriptions of the photos and videos that bolster those themes.

Bonds are Created through Connections within the Community and Family

All seven participants expressed strong bonds with the communities they grew up in when they were children, which was one of the factors that led six of the participants to continue to live in those communities. Some of those bonds are created through specific places, others through the nostalgia of events, and others through the feeling that the community emits. Sally described one of these places that served as a source of bonding as we took the community tour:

> I've sung here so many times for different tree-lighting ceremonies, within the gazebo—that's where everything happens, in the middle. This also was an area where we would always have an event. They would close this off and this would be the heart of the town. And we would have events like… we would march through here with our marching bands in middle school and high school. We would have big vendors coming out and everything for the 4th of July. Carnivals and things like this. So, we would always meet all different types [of people]. This was the center of Joyful Springs...This is the area where everyone felt safe to mix with each other.

What Sally alluded to in this excerpt was the racial diversity that has always existed in Joyful Springs. While students were friends with all types of people in schools, the center of town was where families could mix, no matter the race, and feel comfortable and accepted. It also served as the heart of the community, drawing families together to develop the sense of home that has led her to remain in the community. During our community tour, Sally made sure that I had video of this part of town, as it was an important part of her life.

Gloria, who also lives in Joyful Springs described it this way during our community tour: "I think that's what makes Joyful Springs special is that those that are here usually stay… I think it's a very homey community. Everybody's very welcoming." Gloria described how she had left Joyful Springs to live in New York City for a while, but when Covid hit, she had moved back. Once she returned, she realized that Joyful Springs was home. She had missed the community and all that it meant to her. For Gloria, the heart of the town was not the Gazebo, but rather the library, where she spent much of her middle and high school years. It was the place that we started our community tour and where I began taking video.

Jane had a similar experience, moving away from Smiling Valley, only to return and realize it was the only place she could truly call home.

> I remember when I graduated; I was like, I'm never coming back here. There's nothing for me here. I went to [a maritime college]. And part of that is I got my captain's license and you had to ship out for two months every year. And I went to some awesome ports and I came back and I went across the causeway because I still live in Smiling Valley and I'm like, oh my God, this is the most beautiful place there is. And there were so many opportunities. I just didn't see them…It's my community. It's my home.

While Jane described this during our first interview, as part of the community tour Jane also brought me to the Causeway and recounted the same story about how it was only upon leaving and returning to her community that she discovered that Smiling Valley had everything she wanted and could never leave again. The video footage showed many people stopped at the causeway to take photos of the beauty of the location.

Suzy, who lives in Gleeful Springs, was far more reserved than the other participants in describing her bond explicitly, but the strong bond was evident through her actions. Even after

her family farm was sold off, Suzy continued to live in the community to raise her family. She stated, “I live in the community. As a matter of fact, my daughter attended Gleeful Springs district and she graduated top of her class…I never left. I only left when I went to go to college.” The fact that Suzy explains that she never left shows how strong her bond is with the community.

Michelle, who also lives in Gleeful Springs and has chosen to raise her children and send them to the school district, expressed her bond with the community during our community tour through the places she went as a child that her children now enjoy: “So, this is the big rock beach. That rock, I used to do backflips off of and jump off of; I still do it. My kids jump off the big rock. I spent a lot of my childhood here.” She also recounted how she would go out in the canoe with her father to check the lobster pots, go sledding down a big hill at the house of friends of her parents, walk through a path in the woods to get to her friend’s house, and go snowshoeing in a local park. All these places created memories that show her bond with the community. They were also all locations that she brought me to during our community tour, which she made sure I took footage of with the video camera.

Brianna described the happy childhood she had growing up in Cheerful Harbor as a way to explain her bond with the community. Between attending community events, playing in local parks, eating at local McDonald’s, and visiting friends’ homes, she always felt like she belonged.

> We would all make a date to go to the carnival together. One of our parents would drop us off and pick us up. We always used to look forward to going to the carnival. We hung out at each other’s houses a lot. We would ride our bikes to each other’s houses. Leave your bike on the front lawn. Everybody would know that’s where everybody is because our bikes are there.

Throughout the community tour, Brianna fondly talked about all the fun she and her friends had and how she could not imagine having grown up anywhere else. She made sure that I had video of all the places she hung out, including the two McDonald's she frequented with her friends, along with the houses where she hung out with her friends. She even compared her experience to her boyfriend's childhood, who grew up in Queens; he did not understand the connection she had with her community, her friends, and her school.

Mary's bond with the community is a little different than the other participants, as she no longer lives there. As discussed earlier, numerous changes had taken place in Happy Valley. As a result, she is nostalgic over the loss of the community she once knew. While she discussed happy memories of the past and her love for the community during that time, a sense of sadness overcame her during the community tour as she really saw the community for what it is now. There were periods of time during our community tour when she became completely silent, others when she became teary eyed thinking about what the community and school district were then and what they are now. She also shed a few tears when looking at photos of field day, due to the decrease in population of the school. "Look at how many people…We're down to a hundred kids in each grade." When asked what she hoped would stay the same in the community since there have been so many changes, she replied, "It's gone. There's nothing. That's it. It's gone. Now it is what it is. What are you going to do? The only thing that I can say is the kids are wonderful, but it's just sad for them that they don't have what I had." What Mary had was a community in which everyone looked out for one another and attended community and school events, a community where you did not know the difference between who was related by blood and who was related by friendship because everyone—as she described—was family. She said

that sense of family is still there for her students, but the people who live in the community are no longer who she considers family.

When Mary discussed having chosen her current home, she shared that many people from the old neighborhood lived in her new community and compared the sense of family to what her current students encounter.

> My kids were able to grow up with a group of parents and a set of kids that always had their back. And that's what Happy Valley was all about. And it's still the same way. The kids that I have, I've taught many cousins, so the families are wonderful. It's still the same, just different nationality. And it's still a bad area.

Part of the sense of family that she lost was described in the segregation of the religious population from the rest of the community and how those who are not religious are not welcome. "We would hang out here. We would eat here. It was the place to be. But now it's not. It's the place for the [religious population]. So, our kids really have nothing to do." The religious isolation within the community really upset Mary and became a topic in each of her interviews.

Family Bonds with the Community Help Shape Worldviews. The participants in this study all discussed how their worldview was shaped by their families, schools, and communities. However, the participants, for the most part, combined schools and communities into one, having difficulty separating the two. As a result, for the purpose of reporting the data, the term *school* refers to both school and community. During the first interview, participants were asked to describe their worldview, which was defined in the question as "attitudes, beliefs, values, and the lens in which you view the world." All the educators in the study defined their worldview differently, but it was also the question that appeared most challenging for the participants to answer. It was clearly something they had never given deep thought about or had ever been

asked about. The participants were then asked if a collectivist or individualist worldview was impressed upon them by their family, school, and community. To help them better understand the question, participants were told, "Some societies are individualists, believing that individual achievement has greater role in society, while others are collectivists, meaning that the goals of the community are more important than the individual." Table 4.2 lists their worldview, as quoted from the interviews in response to the questions: "How would you describe your worldview?" "Which worldview was impressed upon by your family?" "By your school?" "By your community?"

Table 4.2

Worldviews of Participants

Participant	Worldview Perspective	Home	School
Brianna	"Everybody should do whatever makes them happy in life"	I	I
Gloria	"Find beauty in everything and have a positive outlook in life"	I	C
Jane	"Everybody has potential, and it doesn't matter where you come from, everybody can do something"	C	I &C
Mary	"You need to be cultured"	C	C
Michelle	"You find a need and you fill the need"	I	C
Sally	"Cynical and loving at the same time"	C	C
Suzy	"You get more bees with honey than lemon"	C	C

Note. C represents a collectivist worldview, whereas I represents an individualist worldview.

Although most of the worldviews listed in Table 4.2 are relatively straightforward, two need further explanation to truly understand their meaning; they also speak directly to the changing population in the schools. When Mary stated, "You need to be cultured," she was speaking about the importance of surrounding yourself with other cultures, rather than those who are like yourself. While she chose to move out of Happy Valley, she relocated into a community that had the same cultural diversity that she had been exposed to as a child. She wanted to make sure that her children went to school with children of all races, which is what she meant by

"cultured." "I moved to into [where I live now] because they basically had 20% of every culture. And I wanted my kids to grow up with that because I grew up with culture." There were times during the interview where Mary used culture and race interchangeably.

Sally's worldview was a little more complex. The "cynical and loving at the same time" refers to colleagues and their discussions on race and culture. She clarified her worldview as, "It is very interesting to see how people react to certain things or how there's a lot of *Karens* out there. There are people who lean on their color shield as well and there's no happy medium sometimes." Sally, having grown up in Joyful Springs, had the exposure to various races and cultures from the time she was born, while many of her colleagues did not. She felt as though she must serve as the bridge between those teachers who understand the community and those teachers who do not, those who understand the shifting demographics, and those who are frustrated by them. She further explained her point by saying "You can't throw the Black or Hispanic card just because and you also can't be so oblivious of what other cultures are that you don't take time to learn." Sally also realizes that she can best serve the school by being both student and teacher to her fellow educators: "Sometimes I just watch; I'm not as vocal. I take it in and then slowly I will plant seeds to people who I feel like they need seed planting, or if I feel I need planting, I will go and ask, 'what do you think?'" The complexity of the changing demographics on Long Island was spoken to directly through her explanation of her worldview, which was shaped through her childhood experiences in a diverse community.

When the participants were asked to choose between whether their schools and communities had raised them with the collectivist or individualist mentality, six out of the seven felt that their school impressed upon them with a collectivist worldview. In terms of the interviews, it was hard to separate out the school from the community at large because the

participants spoke about both interchangeably. Brianna was the only participant who said that the school valued individual achievements over the community as a whole. However, she did say that her current students have a more collectivist mentality. She explained that when she attended Cheerful Harbor, there was a heavy focus on all students going to college, whereas now, the focus is on the future, not only college.

> You need to worry about your future. What are you going to do in the future? Are you going go to college? Are you going go to trade school or you're going to get a job? Not every kid wants to go to college. I think that's made such a difference, especially in my students because some of them are like, 'I don't want to go to college.'

The shift in focus from 'every student must go to college' to planning a future overall may help explain the difference between Brianna's feeling that the school prioritized an individualist worldview while she attended Cheerful Harbor and the fact why students now have a collectivist mentality.

Conversely, when asked about the worldview impressed upon the participants by their families, there was less consensus regarding individualistic or collectivists perspectives. Those who were raised through the individualist worldview—Brianna, Gloria, and Michelle—had families that wanted them to be independent and responsible for their actions and grades in school. As Gloria explained, "My parents were always very hard working, and they always wanted us to work hard and make an impression." The participants who described being raised in the collectivist worldview—Jane, Mary, Sally, and Suzy—explained how family was important and came first. As Suzy stated simply, "It takes a little bit of help from everybody." Suzy had been raised on a farm, where everyone was expected to chip in and help. The same was true for Jane whose family owned their own business, "We knew the value of working together to get

something done. We took a small business that my dad started…and it's really grown and flourished because of that group effort." Sally explained how the collectivist worldview that she was raised with made her a better person: "That has absolutely helped me become a better mother, a better wife, a better community member and be an amazing teacher." Mary described the community as a family, in which everyone helped each other out, helping form that collectivist worldview. The participants' understanding of their students' worldviews is discussed later in the section that discusses bonds with people.

Community Bonds Change Over Space and Time. Although all the communities have experienced demographic changes and a large increase in Spanish-speaking immigrant families, many have also experienced changes in development, industry, and housing. These changes have caused some friction within the communities, affecting the bonds people have within the community. All but one of the participants spoke about these changes.

In Gleeful Springs, the popularity of farms and vineyards among New York City residents has disrupted the sense of peace the community once had, especially during the fall. Due to the influx in traffic, Michelle and Suzy both discussed how long it can take to get through the town and how frustrating it is for the residents. To quote Michelle, "Something that might take you fifteen minutes to get to will take you an hour and a half." Suzy echoed that notion, discussing how in the past farms and visitors coexisted without intrusion to the residents: "Back then, I'm sure you didn't have traffic. With the breweries and the wineries and the pumpkin picking all combined—all three of those together—you get the traffic congestion." Both Michelle and Suzy took me to working farms on our community tours so that I would have video footage of that aspect of their community. Participants from both Gleeful Springs and Smiling

Valley discussed how tourism has disrupted the everyday lives of the residents, describing the tourists as “cityiots.”

Smiling Valley is an area that has encountered two extremes in change over time. It is a juxtaposition between wealthy part-time residents fixing up homes worth over a million dollars apiece, living in them only on the weekends or summers, and the influx of a large immigrant population with multiple families sharing apartments or homes meant for a single family. Jane admitted she was struggling with these aspects of the changes in the community.

> It's bittersweet. It’s nice to see these old historic homes being preserved. It’s nice to see a vibrant downtown community, but on the same token, it’s sad because with that you are losing the diversity. You’re losing the families, the generational families. And it’s not the same…I haven’t reconciled it in my head.

Although Jane is grateful that old homes are being repaired and are beautifying the neighborhood, at the same time the affordability is being lost and life-long residents are being forced to move to more affordable neighborhoods. During our community tour, she made sure that I had video so I would be able to visualize the difference in living conditions of her students and that of the part-time residents.

In Joyful Springs, the shift to a large Spanish-speaking population has frustrated Sally, who happens to be bilingual herself. While on our community tour, Sally pointed out businesses where Spanish is the only language spoken within that store:

> So many of these places, the people who work there speak only Spanish. And that’s kind of frustrating. I grew up and watched how all of a sudden everyone’s just speaking Spanish. It was so segregated, Black, White. Now it’s, ‘How can we get a translator’?

For Gloria, her frustration was not in the language of the community, but the taking away of affordable housing. She described how there was a mobile home park where her friend had lived and how the residents were bought out so it could be converted to apartments: “If you think about it, those apartments are not affordable at all…One bedroom [costs] $2,500 [a month].” She regretted how the cost of living is pricing families out of the community.

Last, the cost of living was something that frustrated Mary as well. In order for her students to live in the community, they are living in what she perceived as less-than-ideal circumstances. Although the part of the community in which she lived was always impoverished, her family, at least, had their own space: “We still had an apartment. Now they have a room, which should be illegal, because this is not okay. So, you have these kids, sleeping with their parents in a room, sharing a kitchen, sharing a bathroom [with other families].” As Mary contrasted the homes her family lived when she was growing up, with the mansions the private school students live in today, she had difficulty reconciling the two extremes in a modest community that she once called home.

Bonds are Formed Through Attachment with the School

The bonds that the participants all have with their schools could be classified as strong. Although some participants explicitly stated how strong their bond was, others demonstrated that bond in more subtle ways. When asked to describe her bond with the school or district, Brianna said, “I think I’m too attached,” which Michelle echoed with her one-word answer, “Strong.” Jane said, “I would tell you it’s my home.” Gloria reiterated, “I felt like I was coming back home.” Suzy described it as a sense of honor, “I’ve taken pride in the fact that I enjoy that I work in the school district that I grew up in.” Sally took a different approach, explaining, “I’m quite vested, because I went to school here, because this is my community.” Mary, with her mixed

feelings due to the changes in the community and district, characterized her bond a little differently. She expressed that she initially returned because she "wanted to give back" and that "back then it was a great place to be." However, that bond, like the community has been altered, "It's different now; it's sad now…they could be doing so much more for these kids and it's killing me." Even though Mary's bond reflects a sense of sadness, she clearly still has a bond with the students and the school as a whole, as reflected in the fact she is bothered by what has been lost.

School Bonds Harbor a Sense of Home and Belonging. The participants also described how that bond with the school gave them not only a sense of home but also a sense of belonging. Gloria noted that her feelings toward the school is what lured her back. "What tied me into staying here in Joyful Springs was the fact that I felt a sense of belonging and I was able to identify with the kids and the kids are able to identify with me." Brianna demonstrated that sense of home and belonging by describing how the school formed who she was.

> I always knew I wanted to teach in Cheerful Harbor…I felt connected to the community; and it has done so much for me and molded me into who I am. I knew that I wanted to work with kids that were just like me.

Sally described that sense of home and belonging in terms of happiness: "I was happy to be here and I felt the same warmth from administrators and colleagues alike…It was awesome. It felt great." Michelle illustrated that sense of home in her feelings as well. "I felt like I was loved, and I was nurtured." Suzy demonstrated her sense of family and belonging in a slightly different way. When going through her class photos from 50 years ago, she was able to name almost all the students who were in her classes and kept in contact with almost half of them on Facebook. It was as if her classmates were her family and her school was her home, without outright saying it.

Jane expressed not fitting in her previous district and only feeling that sense of belonging when she reached Smiling Valley: "I remember just not feeling like I fit in [in the previous district], and when I got to Smiling Valley, I had teachers that really cared."

As in previous discussions of bonds, Mary portrayed her bond in the past tense. She described the sense of home through the sense of family she felt in the community before the big changes. During the photovoice interview, there were several photos of a bicentennial parade, where the school children dressed up in clothing from 1776, costumes that were all handmade by the parents. Mary noted how many people attended the parade then and lamented how few come out now, "Happy Valley was the type of community where everybody came out for everything." It was this knowledge that everybody in the school and community was there to support one another that she developed a sense of home and belonging. Mary contrasted her experience in school to that to her students' families now. "Our population primarily…only speaks Spanish, so they really don't participate in schoolwide activities. Our PTA (Parent Teacher Association) parent, as I was explaining, comes from the middle school to help out because we don't have a PTA." The lack of a PTA, along with the discontinuation of annual schoolwide activities that tied the community and school together, clearly upset Mary.

While the participants detailed their own sense of belonging and home within the school, four of them also explained how their students are experiencing a bond with the school now. However, most described the school as a safe harbor for the students. Suzy stated, "School is a safe space for them…they know they're going to have food. They know they are going to have attention." Jane articulated that the school is "their security net…It's their place of safety, their place of belonging." Sally echoed this notion of shelter by describing the school as a safe haven: "It's a safe haven for them. Some students come to school just to have at least two good meals."

Mary, despite her own sense of loss, explained how her students do not know what they are missing, so they treasure the school: “They love it. They really do. It’s their home…They don’t know what Happy Valley was before. They think it’s wonderful that they have a place to go that’s safe.” This notion of a safe haven often revolves around what the schools can provide for the students that the parents may otherwise not be able to financially, which is discussed in greater detail below. However, the idea of school as a safe haven also reflects a vision the teachers have for their students that they did not have when they described their own school experiences. The notion of school as a safe haven implies that the homes that their students are coming from cannot provide for their basic needs, whereas when they went to school their families could.

Financial Burdens Affect Family Bonds with Schools. Five of the participants described the financial burdens that families in the school currently face, which impact their ability to demonstrate their bonds in ways similar to when the participants were younger. Although they expressed an understanding that parents must work to support their families, the educators also lamented the decrease in parental involvement that they perceived as a direct result of this need to work. Suzy stated, “There’s not as much parental support…I know a lot of parents are working hard, but we need them to be involved.” Sally described it in this way, “So many parents are working. I have parents with three jobs. They don’t even speak English, and so you do what you have to do.” Jane concurred,

> I see a lot less involvement now, but I get it. It’s hard to find housing out here, and when you find housing, it’s really, really expensive. So, parents are working multiple jobs to keep houses and food over their head…So I get it, but we need to find time and build those connections back.

Mary voiced regret, “I don’t have parents coming into the classroom. You don’t get volunteers anymore.” Michelle described the struggles the children face in getting help with homework: “Their basic needs needed to be met through the parents having to work hours that maybe weren’t the same hours as their child had and maybe there wasn’t somebody who was at home who could take care of [the homework].” In contrast, the two youngest participants, whose parents both worked while they were in school, did not discuss a decrease in parental involvement.

Students' Bonds Change as Time Passes. The participants discussed the differences between the bonds they have and had with the school and those that their students have now. Five of the educators described how their students were still too young to understand their bond with the school. As Sally explained, “I think we’re starting to teach them the bond. Don’t forget they’re young. So, I’m teaching them to love their community.” Jane furthered this idea that bonds develop over time, stating, “My bonds might be a little bit stronger now just because I came back. They’re still young.” Suzy pointed out that when the children are young, “They’re just excited to be in school.” Mary concurred, saying, “They are just happy to be in school.” The participants expressed that their students cannot really describe that bond with their school until they get older. The biggest change that the educators discussed was how technology devices (cell phones, tablets, video games) have changed how children form bonds. As Brianna stated, “They’re still so young that all they care about is themselves. Their bond is with their iPhones and social media.” All the participants discussed how the bonds students have with each other have been transformed by technology. Rather than hanging out together, they sit on their devices. While the educators viewed technology as an impediment to bonding with people, they seemed to lack an understanding of how bonds have not disappeared but rather have shifted. Although

face-to-face bonding may have decreased, students are creating new bonds through social media. The shift in forms of communication is something the educators in this study have not reconciled.

Bonds are Developed Through Relationships with People

All the participants discussed how relationships with people, especially teachers, helped build bonds within the school and community that drew them back to teach in the school districts they had attended. Jane fondly remembered her favorite English teacher in Smiling Valley who made a distinct impact upon her while we did the community tour within her school:

> He was one of my favorite teachers. He would tell a story like no other…He was one of the first teachers [who made me think] 'Wait a minute; they care. They have personality.' He made you want to work.

The teacher was so important that she took me to his room on our tour so that I would have video footage of it. Sally described the joy she felt in school all the time as she went through class photos of her times as a student in Joyful Springs. "These teachers were just happy all the time. I remember happiness all the time. I feel like many of our teachers [now] have a stressed face on a lot." Whether or not teachers were stressed then or not, Sally was unable to see the stress she feels the current teachers in her school experience. Suzy described a special bond she had with her fourth-grade teacher as she looked at the class photo during our photovoice interview. "I love [her]. I always remember her teaching us the game of Spit with cards." As we took the community tour and pulled up to her elementary school, Brianna remembered a teacher she had two years in a row. "For third and fourth grade I had the same teacher. She was amazing." She then discussed how she taught with her in the same school and to her amazement, the teacher still had a gift she had given her all those years ago. "I saw a pencil case on her desk…[I said] I gave

you that pencil case and she [said], 'Really?' And then I looked at the bottom and it was engraved, to [Ms. X] from Brianna." However, Brianna felt her strongest bonds were formed in middle school, the age she currently teaches. "The teachers really helped me become who I am today. Especially middle school. Middle school was when I started to really form a bond with my teachers." Gloria explained how she felt a bond with her math teacher, especially because he was Latino, like her, and how he brought his own special flair to the classroom. "He always brought his own personality and I think that's what makes Joyful Springs special is that teachers bring their own…little spark."

Mary, even as she struggles with the changes in the district, emphasized how much the teachers still care about the kids, which to her, is the most important aspect of being a teacher. "It's basically the same thing because the teachers are loving—you know, that didn't change." Michelle also spoke about bonding in the present tense as she spoke to her need as a teacher to be a cheerleader for her current and former students, many of whom are in class with her own children: "It makes my heart full to try to, to help be one of those connections for them." Even though the participants all recounted positive experiences with teachers, a few remembered teachers who made the participants shudder as they thought back to their childhood.

As the participants took time to think about the past, some described teachers who left them with experiences or years that they would have preferred to forget. Mary recalled currently working with a substitute teacher who had been in the school when she was a student. When I asked if she was one of Mary's teachers, her response was, "No! She was mean!" Brianna recounted a similar experience as she currently works with a teacher, whom she never liked. "There's one teacher I did not like when I was a student. Sometimes it's hard for me to [form] that bond now…I didn't like you then. And I don't like you now." Michelle remembered a year

of schooling that she considered a contrast to her other years in Gleeful Springs: “I had one teacher who was a bit…strict and yelled a lot. So, that year was kind of a bust.” Overall, with these few exceptions, all the participants described positive bonds with their teachers and schools.

Bonds with People Help Foster Future Success. The bonds that the participants formed with their childhood teachers put them on the right track and led them to pursue careers in teaching. Some of those bonds saved them when they started teaching. Suzy recalled her inspiration for becoming a teacher: “My biology teacher was my favorite teacher. Matter of fact, he is part of the reason why I became a teacher.” Michelle also explained how her teachers persuaded her career choice.

> A lot of the teachers influenced me to become a teacher. I was a struggling reader when I was little…I had some academic struggles there for a period of time and I think it just helped me kind of to persevere, give [me] strength. But the people who were there were the ones who really helped support me do that.

Mary, while not directly speaking to teachers, articulated her reason for returning to Happy Valley as, “I wanted to give back.” The participants not only spoke directly about who influenced their desire to teach but also explained how far reaching their teachers’ influence extended.

Sally discussed how her drama club director taught her the difference between standard English and the dialect she spoke in school and at home. She noted how learning standard English prepared her for success.

> Our director was an English teacher, and she was very picky on articulating your words and speaking the King’s English properly…That helped me be able to sell myself even

> more because I'm able to speak well. I come from immigrant parents who spoke broken English and have very thick accents.

Gloria spoke to how her teachers at the high school level gave her that drive for success: "I learned a ton and a lot of teachers challenged and pushed me…especially in high school." The teachers' influence on the participants' success went beyond when they were students.

Brianna explained how the bond with her teachers helped her as she began her career in education: "I felt connected to the school and also the teachers supported me a lot because they knew me." Jane discussed how her bond with a former teacher saved her job: "My ninth year, they said, 'We think we have to excess you. The budget isn't looking good this year.' [My former teacher] said, `What if I retired and came back part-time'…So, he saved my position." This teacher was so important to Jane that she had me enter his room and get video footage when we went on the community tour. Bonds with people can not only help foster success but also develop a sense of belonging within a place.

Bonds with People Develop a Sense of Belonging. The participants described bonds with family, educators, friends, teammates, and coaches alike as helping to instill a sense of belonging within the school and community. In addition, they discussed how, as educators, they developed bonds with their own students to help them develop a sense of belonging, as well as a sense of understanding of one another.

Upon returning to Happy Valley to teach, Mary described a comfort level because she knew her co-workers, even if they had not previously served as her teachers: "I knew everybody, and that was nice." Jane expressed her gratitude for the teachers she had at Smiling Valley: "I thank God that I came back to teach at the time that I did because the teachers that I felt home with were here and I started my career with them now as mentors."

Brianna compared her own schooling with the experience of her boyfriend, who had grown up in New York City. He does not understand the close relationships she still has with her friends from elementary school because he did not go to school with kids from his own community. “So, when I tell him, this is my friend from third grade, he’s like, ‘You know people from third grade, or even from high school?’ He’s so disconnected from that. And I’m so grateful that I’m not.”

Mary, Michelle, and Gloria spoke to the bonds that were formed on sports teams. For Mary it was volleyball; for Michelle it was field hockey; and for Gloria, it was soccer. Mary, while looking at photos from her volleyball games, stated, “I loved the sports teams. I really did. It was just a nice way to keep you out of trouble. We all got along. There was no petty stuff.” The importance of field hockey to Michelle may be best displayed in the sheer number of field hockey photos she brought to the photovoice interview. She explained, “If it wasn’t for the sports, I think I would’ve really not had as good of an experience. Having the opportunity of being part of a team and then meeting all of those people [helped me].” Gloria, while looking at yearbook photos of her soccer team, exclaimed, “It was a good team. It was a second home for me. I loved it.” While sports served as a source of bonding for some, clubs and activities served to provide a sense of belonging for others.

Drama was a major part of Sally’s school career. It served as her sense of belonging in Joyful Springs and she fondly recounted it as she looked at pictures from her middle school yearbook: “I remember these guys. They were some amazing vocalists and just some really smart kids and I was around them in school…So it felt very comfortable to be around them.” While Sally discussed her sense of belonging within the drama club, Suzy brought the work she had done on the school newspaper to show her bond with her friends and classmates. She read

the last will and testament that she had written her senior year in high school, “All those double lunches we spent together, may our friendship last forever.” Her friends served as her sense of belonging. Bonds not only help provide a sense of belonging but also help to understand those who are different.

Bonds with People Contribute to the Understanding of Others. While discussing their own worldviews, the participants were also asked to discuss how they develop an understanding of the worldviews of their students. In all the interviews, the importance of having conversations with their students and understanding who their students are as people became apparent. Some participants even described how their students helped redefine their own worldviews.

The participants all communicated the value of talking to their students to better understand them as people. Jane put it very simply, “You definitely have to talk to them because they’ll let you know.” Sally also gave a very straightforward response, “talking to them, table talk.” Suzy also did not mince words, simply saying, “I just listen to them.” Gloria elaborated a little further when she stated, “I have that time to talk to them one-to-one about their families, their home life, what they did this weekend, where they went to eat, things like that. Just connecting with the students is so important.” Mary explained it this way, “You talk to them as adults, not children. When things are brought up, you face the facts. You discuss it.” Brianna gave a similar response, “It’s all about just building healthy relationships with your students, talking to them, getting them to trust you and being able to confide in you about even simple things, and just getting to know them on a deeper level.” Michelle described how the use of literature helps spur conversations that help children develop a better understanding of one another and for her to understand them as well: “Making sure that the books that I’m reading represent other cultures…so they can see themselves in those types of books…the experience

may not be the same, but we have common feelings." Getting to know their students' life experiences forced many of the participants to self-reflect on their own worldviews and five of them explained how their own worldviews have evolved over time.

Although Mary and Suzy felt that a person's worldview is instilled at an early age, Gloria, Brianna, Michelle, Jane, and Sally discussed how experiences with others—including their students—and maturity has helped their worldviews evolve over time. Brianna stated, "I've become more mature and because of that, I've learned more about certain things." Gloria explained, "When I was younger, I was more close-minded and as I got older and I started learning about different things in school, it changed; it shifted." Jane illustrated how her immigrant students helped her worldview shift.

> My world has been opened by my students…I would say my openness, my inclusiveness is the same, but my understanding of some of the stories these kids have, just brought that to a whole new level. They have more maturity and have been through more experiences than I will ever go through.

Sally stated that life experiences "had to change your values, change you. Your life experiences make your values change." Michelle explained how her parents came from a small town in another state with very little diversity within the population and as a result she had a narrower view of the world until she went to school: "My view, it was really small…I really was not aware. I could say, oh, I went to school with Black people, and I had some friends who were Black, African American. But I didn't know. I really didn't know." Michelle was referring to the differences in experiences that she had as a White student and those experiences her Black classmates had in school and within the Gleeful Springs community. Although the participants

reported that the bonds within the school, community, and with people were overwhelmingly positive, the changes in the community and schools have presented challenges to the participants.

Changes in the School and Community Present Challenges to the Sense of Identity and Home

In all the communities in this study, the dramatic shift in demographics, especially in terms of the linguistic background of the population, have led the participants to not only look closely at the bonds they have with the school and community but also examine the impact these changes have in regard to those bonds. They further examined how such changes might impact their teaching as well as their relationships with both parents and students. In four out of the five districts, the participants discussed that when they were growing up, the districts were considered diverse because they had a mix of Black and White students. Overall, Latinx students represented a very small part of the population. In the fifth district, the participant discussed how the majority of the students were Black, with very few White or Hispanic students. In terms of linguistic diversity, all seven participants recounted how there were a very small number of ELLs in their schools when they were young. All seven districts now have a majority-Hispanic populations (NYSED, 2020). The rise in the Latinx population has corresponded to a large increase in ELLs, which has presented challenges that are discussed further below.

Several participants discussed how financial burdens of the family, especially first-generation Americans, led to older siblings taking care of younger siblings, or by caregivers who do not speak English. The need for babysitting is a result of the parents working multiple jobs but that in turn led to some resentment among teachers within the participants' schools. The participants, in some instances, demonstrated their understanding of the changing dynamics within the community, while also expressing their own frustrations. As Sally said,

> We don't have as much support. There is still support. We still have awesome parents that do awesome things, but there's so many more different priorities. It's too expensive to live here. And so, there's a lot of jobs. And our older kids who I had and I could call are taking care of their kindergarten [siblings].

Brianna also expressed a similar situation with her students: "Most of my students, their parents work all day or sometimes they have a hard time. They're babysitting their brothers and sisters and not able to do their homework because of their living situation." While Brianna feels empathy for the students, some of her fellow teachers do not:

> I hear other teachers say things like, well, they need to do their homework. They're not the babysitter. [But] that's easier said than done. As a parent, your choice is to pay the bills, or you don't have that option.

Mary discussed the difficulties in babysitting for younger siblings during remote learning for one of her second-grade students: "The parent would lay the baby next to her and tell her to watch the baby. So, she's watching this baby while [attending class] online…It's just a mess." Michelle contrasted what she has available to her family as a White, middle-class household compared to that of her immigrant students. "Sometimes there's multiple families within one home. And somebody from another family would help watch the child, but maybe they didn't have the ability to help them with their homework." She went on to say that on the other hand, she would have the financial ability to send her children to a childcare situation where the caregiver would be able to help her children with the homework.

Demographic Changes in Language and Culture Present Challenges for the School and Community. While shifts in populations always force communities to reconcile the changes and what they mean, demographic shifts involving immigrants who do not have a command of

English often present a particularly difficult challenge. As Jane explained, the language barrier is stressful for students and teachers alike:

> I think when they first get here, they look at me as someone that's intimidating, and that they don't necessarily know whether they can trust you or not. And with the language barrier, they're scared to try a new language until they get to know you.

Brianna, who speaks Spanish, expressed the stress she feels when her students leave her class to go to other classes:

> There's also a lot of students that are still unable to speak English. I'm the only special education teacher that speaks Spanish. So sometimes I worry about them because, what's happening in the other classes? I'm able to communicate with them, but I know that they struggle in other classes.

Suzy discussed how she tries to learn some Spanish words to better help her students, but it is a struggle for her: "I would try to learn some vocabulary. I mean, really just numbers. I really don't take well to learning a language easily." Beyond the difficulties communicating with students, many of the participants discussed how the language barrier with parents has a direct impact on the schools.

Sally shared how some teachers opt not to communicate with parents who do not speak English claiming they cannot speak with them, but how that is not really the fact.

> Especially with parents who don't speak the language and they're like, I don't know how to communicate. Yes, you do. Sure, you do. You get on a phone, you call me up, you call one of us and we'll make sure it happens, but you have to do it.

Michelle stated a similar sentiment.

> We need to make those phone calls to parents [who do not speak English] and isn't it so much easier to make the phone call to the parent who speaks English, your native language? However, it's essential to make those same phone calls and try to get the parents aware.

Brianna spoke to her personal understanding of the need to communicate with parents who do not speak English.

> I'm one of the only people in my family that speaks English. So, I know the struggle. I understand how it is for my mom to be somewhere and not be able to communicate. I make it a priority to help them as much as I can.

However, even though there is an acknowledgement that communicating with parents in a language they understand is necessary, some of the participants expressed a resentment toward those families who chose not to learn English.

As much as Sally feels that teachers need to reach out to parents who do not speak English, she also shared the frustration she has with parents who choose not to learn English: "One thing is that many of the parents are not trying to learn English because they've had it very easy. My parents did it. You have to learn this language. You're in this country. That's what you have to do." Mary echoed this same frustration with how often interpreters are needed to communicate with parents: "They want to keep their home language in the home. Out of my 22 kids, only 5 don't need interpreters." While Mary expressed concern over the maintenance of the home language, Jane spoke to the importance of preserving both the language of the home and the language of the school. "Translation. There's such a dire need. Do not lose your language." While stating the need for the bilingual people in the neighborhood, the use of the word *dire* to describe a need in the community shows how the language barrier affects everyone.

Development Shifts the Sense of Identity Within the Community. In four out of the five communities studied, there were dramatic changes in the towns in terms of development—whether it was the loss of farmland, the introduction of apartment buildings, the conversion of one-family homes to multi-family dwellings, or the gentrification of areas of the community. In Gleeful Springs, the development in the community has led to overcrowding in schools and extreme traffic on the weekends in the fall and spring. During the community tour, Michelle brought me to the center of town, which has become especially populated. "I'm finding that in the town of Gleeful Springs, it's very concentrated…It used to be more single-family homes." The impact on the development was described by her fellow Gleeful Springs resident, Suzy: "We don't have room in our schools [and] they're still building apartments." Suzy explained that the apartments themselves were not necessarily the problem, but rather the tax breaks the developers receive: "I don't think people complained so much when the houses were being built because the houses pay taxes. But the people that build the apartments, they get tax breaks." Although Suzy presented the development of apartments as an issue of tax breaks, she may have been hiding behind the shield of classism, where families who could afford single-family homes held a higher social status than those renting apartments. However, neither she nor Michelle directly said this.

Several of the participants expressed concerns over the transformation of single-family homes into multifamily dwellings. Michelle spoke of this topic in terms of safety concerns.

> The town, especially the district and the people in the community, are trying to crack down. Not because here's all these people that aren't supposed to be here, but it's a safety issue. You want people living in decent conditions, right? Or conditions that we perceive as being appropriate.

Suzy portrayed the multifamily dwellings as a political issue: “I know that in my community there are some families that are upset about the multi-family in single homes. So, you have those political issues there.” Mary showed her disgust over the transformation of the community she once knew and how little regulation there was to prevent people from living in deplorable conditions when she showed me a former bakery was converted into multi-family apartments. “It’s a lot of residential, a lot of families within one [apartment]…look at how many mailboxes!” Jane felt that safety is not a priority in the village for the multifamily homes in her community due to the lack of affordable housing. “[The houses] get inspected. But if you don’t have enough housing and people are looking for housing and there’s not enough, do you really inspect too hard?” Sally, during the community tour, pointed out homes in the community that looked uncared for due to the number of people in the home. It was the area in the community that was the poorest and she tried to reconcile her feelings toward it being unkempt with her feelings that not all people have what she has.

> [I learned] how to take pride and not just have 15 cars in the driveway. Even though I had friends that were like that as well. It helped me appreciate how to take care of your home. And if you don’t have it and you have to live the way my other friends might have lived in the houses that we passed by, it’s okay.

All the participants appeared to carefully choose their words when describing the housing trying to remain politically neutral. Although they did not directly state it, their words could easily be a shield for a tacit sense of classism that is developing in the community. Although language barriers and development have led to frustration for the participants, so have changes in the administration.

Changes in Administration Alters the Sense of Home in a School. Four of the seven participants discussed how changes in administration affects the whole culture of a school and district. Jane described the problems that arise when administrators do not understand the community.

> We've had a lot of changes in our small district over the last few years. I'm on my third superintendent. I'm on multiple principals and I don't want to be rude, but they're not local. They don't have that sense of community that a lot of us here have. So, their ideals and their things that they find important aren't necessarily the stuff that we've always held near and dear.

Mary argued how too many administrators are not vested in the community. When she was a child in the district, she said that most of the teachers and administrators lived within the district, but that is no longer the case.

> Once you have people that are not vested in the district, it's different because you don't care, your kid doesn't go there. Your niece doesn't go there. If your niece or your nephew or whatever, if they went, you would care.

Sally, who also indicated that administrators used to live within the district, talked about the difficulties in a revolving door of administrators, who do not take the time to learn the community and school before instrumenting changes.

> [We have] such a high transient of administrators that try to fix in their way and not realize, learn the community first. That's administration 101. Learn who you're working with. Find out who the team players are and take it from there. Don't just throw these new [ideas]… Slow down.

Brianna discussed the recent changes in administration in terms of a fear of what will come. “We have a new superintendent. I know there’s been a lot of changes around… so, the culture and the climate changes a little bit.” When asked if those changes would alter her sense of home within the district, she said they may.

Gloria, who is an untenured teacher, did not speak to the administration at all other than to be grateful for the training they offered to new teachers. Michelle and Suzy indicated that many of the administrators in Gleeful Springs still reside within the community, so that lack of vested interest did not exist in the way it did in the other districts.

Conclusion

Although there is no direct research on teachers’ place attachment to their schools and communities, the research on place attachment and topophilia in general are relevant to my study. The work of Relph (1976) and Tuan (1990) reflect the attachment the teachers had to their schools and communities. The communities and schools in this study served as sources of positive experiences and impacted how the participants experienced the world, even helping form their worldviews. The research regarding place attachment and topophilia speaks to the strong impact that bonds with places have in molding who we are as people. The positive experiences that the participants had, and continue to have, within their community and schools helps their bonds remain strong despite the changing demographics and development. Although changing demographics and development impact the everyday lives of the participants, except for Mary, their bonds with the community and schools remain positive.

The feelings of sadness that Mary had, as she no longer lives within her old community, and her interpretation of the changes within the community, could be related to the research of Fried (1963). As previously discussed, Fried measured the levels of depression and extreme grief

of residents in a community who were forced to relocate. Although Mary was not forced to relocate, all the changes that rendered her childhood community unrecognizable mirrored the feelings of the residents evicted from their homes in an urban slum. The loss of home was similar, even though under different circumstances.

Chapter 5 gives a summary of the study, an overview of the dissertation, and a discussion of the findings as they relate to the literature. I also discuss how the findings contribute to the theories of place attachment, topophilia, and SCT, as well as explain the surprising findings within the study. Finally, I describe my personal recommendations and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Schools and communities shape the individuals who live in them, molding them into the people they become. Bonds and attachments to these places impact many aspects of people's lives, including the way in which they view the world, helping form their worldview. In this chapter, I provide an overview of my qualitative study on place attachment, present answers to the research questions using the data presented in Chapter 4, explore additional findings of this study, the implications the findings have for improving best practices in the field of education, and suggest recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

Long Island has seen a dramatic increase in ELLs over the past 20 years, the vast majority of whom (86%) speak Spanish (NYSED, 2020). While the overall population of public school students on Long Island has decreased by 4.5%, the Latinx population has increased by 38.7% (NYSED, 2020). The rise in the Latinx population brings with it an increase in linguistic diversity, which has posed a problem for Long Island schools. One result of the increase in linguistic diversity is the enormous achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs as previously demonstrated in Figure 1.1. Teachers can play a vital role in decreasing the achievement gap. However, there is often a cultural mismatch between teachers and their students on Long Island, (NYSED, 2019). Kuman and Lauermann (2018) and Ukpokodu (2011) discussed the difficulty teachers and education candidates had in understanding students of different cultures due to a lack of intimate contact with people of other races in their everyday lives. In addition to the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in America's teaching workforce, there is also a lack of linguistic diversity. Even though our country has a growing multilingual student population, most teachers remain monolingual. Williams et al. (2016) noted that less than 13% of teachers in the United

States speak a language other than English in their homes. There are no statistics to demonstrate the number of teachers on Long Island who are bilingual.

In the present study, I focused on the lived experiences of educators who returned to their childhood school districts on Long Island where the number of ELLs had increased dramatically over the past 20 years. The increase in linguistic diversity mirrored the increase in the Latinx population in the participants' school districts and communities, as over 90% of the ELLs in all five of the districts in this study spoke Spanish (NYSED, 2020). The purpose of my study was to explore how topophilia—or the emotions of the bond with a particular environment (Tuan, 1990) and place attachment— the emotional attachment to a place (Relph, 1976)—informed the worldview of educators in a K-12 grade setting and how they developed an understanding of the worldview of others. Understanding worldview is the first step in developing cultural competence (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014), which can help bridge the gap between the culture of the home and the culture of the school.

Discussion of the Findings

The objective of this study was to explore the bonds that educators who have returned to their childhood school districts have with their schools and communities and how those bonds informed their own worldviews and their understanding of the worldviews of their students. Due to the lack of research specifically on place attachment and topophilia for teachers, I enhanced my framework by using Vygotsky's SCT, as it not only explained the cultural nature of the development of language and thinking but also explained the development of worldview. As such, his ideas on culture and thinking were used to support the data in this study, along with ideas from researchers who specifically studied worldview. To explain the data on the need for teachers and administrators to have a vested interest in the community, I discussed research on

GYO programs. Although the vast majority of GYO research revolved around paraprofessionals rather than educators returning to their childhood schools, it had useful applications to exploring the phenomenon in this study. In the following sections, I begin by discussing the findings that correspond to the research questions. Next, I present themes that evolved beyond the research questions and then transition to implication for practices. I end with potential areas for future research.

Research Questions

Worldview was the focus of my research questions. More specifically, I explored how the participants' worldviews were formed, how their bond with their communities influenced their worldview formation, and their understanding of their students' worldviews. I also examined the differences in the participants' experiences during their time in school compared to that of their current students. In the following section, I list the specific research questions and the data from the study that answer those questions.

How do K-12 general educators who return to teach in the public schools they attended as children perceive how their communities and schools shaped their worldview?

The seven teachers who participated in the study had difficulty separating out the difference between the worldviews impressed upon them by their schools and those instilled on them by their communities. For the participants, the lines between school and community were blurred. The participants either combined both school and community in their answers, discussed community while describing something that happened in the school, or spoke about something that happened in the school to describe the community. Six out of the seven educators felt that their schools (and communities) prescribed a collectivist worldview, one in which the goals of the community were more important than the individual. The six educators also described how

the schools and community influenced them in believing that everyone should help each other out, that they were all in this world together, and that they could all learn from each other.

Although all the participants discussed experiences within the school and community that influenced their worldview, one specifically stated that the formation of her worldview was "learned behavior." The idea that the development of a worldview is a learned behavior aligned with my framework of Vygotsky and his SCT. Vygotsky suggested that differences in cultural environments affect the development of self-consciousness and worldview (Gredler & Shields, 2007). Vygotsky also described how cultural products shape language, which help shape the self and our knowledge of the world (Benjamin et al., 2020). Therefore, experiences within the school and community shape who people become and how they see the world around them. Accordingly, the teacher's assertion that a collectivist worldview is a product of learned behavior within the school and community and not instinctive was supported by both the framework and related literature.

The seventh participant, who said that the school and community impressed an individualist worldview did not elaborate as to why this was the case, except—as previously discussed in Chapter 4—that her students now hold a more collectivist worldview. She further explained in a subsequent interview that, while she attended Cheerful Harbor, the district had held the belief that all students had to go to college to be successful. However, the district now uses the word *future*, rather than college, to measure success. She said that the students are asked if they are going to work, go to a career and technology school or other career-preparation program, or go to college. The availability of future options was especially important for her special education students. In the past, the pressure on each individual student to go to college appeared to lead to an individualist worldview. The focus on the future overall, where that future

can be an individual or group achievement, seems to contribute to the switch from an individualist to a collectivist worldview. It is important to note that offering options beside college, especially career-preparation programs, can be considered a deficit view, as it is often the poorest and lowest achieving students who are placed into these programs, which often limit access to curriculum that may help in future employment (Clarke & Polesel, 2013).

Schools and communities are not the only place where worldviews are formed. Families play an influential role in molding the worldview of individuals. The following research question addresses which worldviews were impressed upon by the educators' families along with how they developed an understanding of the worldview of their students.

How do teachers make meaning of the origins of their own worldviews and the worldviews of their students?

When asked to examine their own worldviews, everyone whom I interviewed paused and seemed to deeply reflect on the question. It was evident to me that it was not something they frequently thought about or reflected upon. The difficulty of answering the worldview question for teachers was documented in the literature. While understanding one's own worldview is the first step in being able to understand the worldview of others, Ukpokodu (2011) argued that too often teacher candidates do not grasp how influential culture is on how people see and understand the world in which they live and often have not self-reflected on their own culture and worldview. Her research also showed that suburban teacher candidates rarely have intimate contact with people of other races, which limits their understanding and comfort around people different from themselves. The research by Kuman and Lauermann (2018) demonstrated that teacher education programs do little to reverse negative stereotypes or develop a level of comfort among people of different cultures.

Despite the research, all but one of those interviewed spoke of the diversity that existed in their schools while they were students, along with their pride in that diversity. Brianna, who did not speak about the diversity within her childhood school, identified as Afro-Latina and attended a primarily Black school. Although the diversity that the participants spoke about generally referred only to a mix of White and Black students, they did not express being uncomfortable around people of other races or ethnicities. Rather, the perceived diversity of the schools seems to have enhanced their level of comfort around people who are different from themselves. Although the participants' photos of their friends indicated that the teachers maintained their closest relationships with members of their same race, pictures of classes, sports teams, and student activities showed a diversity among the races. Photos of groups of friends at the prom, family parties, and other events reflected what appeared to be a group of same-race friends. However, yearbook photos demonstrated a diversity within the school, which may have been where the participants developed their cross-cultural understanding. During the interviews, discussions of friends never included race, while discussion of school activities often included mentions of diversity, especially during the Photovoice interview, where the photos directly reflected the diversity of the schools. The degree of comfort that the participants expressed between themselves and those of other races matches the research of Johnson (2019) and Wells et al. (2009), who demonstrated how integrated schools serve to increase cross-cultural understandings and comfort levels among people of other races.

All the educators discussed how there were no or very few Latinx students in the schools when they were in attendance. In our discussions, it was not the increase in Latinx students where the participants expressed feelings of unease, so much as it was the language barrier that directly impacted their teaching practices. Several described their frustration and difficulty in

communicating effectively with both parents and students. The impact on professional outcomes and practices is also supported by the literature, which describes teachers as being both underprepared and overwhelmed by having ELLs in their classrooms (Coady et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2010; Peercy et al., 2015; Polat, 2010; Song, 2016).

Although all the educators agreed that the best way to learn about the worldview of their students was to have discussions with them and gain their trust, they all described their own worldviews very differently. The variance in worldviews is supported by Vygotsky's research on language and culture. As Gredler and Shields (2007) explained, according to Vygotsky's theory, worldview and self-consciousness are individually developed and are the result of several contributing factors:

> The primary conditions are instincts and the capabilities inherited by the individual. Secondary conditions are the environment and acquired traits. The third type consists of reflection and self-shaping. All are essential for the development of self-consciousness. (p.191)

In relation to the current study, the participants' unique experiences within their families and environments led to the conditions that created the great variance in personal worldviews.

In discussing how their individual or collectivist worldviews were formed by their families, each of the participants indicated the environment of the home as the source of their beliefs. While the school and community almost always impressed a collectivist worldview, the participants varied on the worldview prescribed by their homes; three indicated an individualist worldview and four discussed a collectivist worldview (see Table 4.2). The variation in worldviews is supported by the current research on individualism versus collectivism. Early research on individualist and collectivist worldviews suggested that Western societies generally

imposed an individualist worldview of the world, while Eastern societies held more collectivist beliefs. However, later research has demonstrated that individual and collectivist worldviews are dependent on individuals rather than cultures as a whole (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2019; Moriizumi, 2011; Oyserman, 1993). In other words, cultures and communities are not monolithic and therefore, neither are the worldviews of individuals within those cultures and communities.

In addition to being asked about the formation of their worldview, the educators were asked about how their bonds influenced their understanding of the worldview of their students. ***What role do place attachment and topophilia play in the understanding of the worldview of the 'other'?***

While two of the participants discussed that worldview is formed at an early age and does not change, five explained how their worldview was influenced by their experiences within their communities, and as such, evolved over time. The explanations of the evolutions of their worldviews reflected a growth in understanding toward those who are different from themselves.

Jane articulated her worldview as "Everybody has potential and it doesn't matter where you come from; everybody can do something." The original nature of the worldview came from the fact that her elementary school felt that an intelligence test indicated that she would not succeed in school. However, this worldview evolved into believing in her immigrant students who must overcome enormous obstacles to succeed. Sally, who described her worldview as "cynical and loving at the same time" discussed how she was frustrated by conversations between colleagues on race and culture within the school. These conversations reflected the changing demographics within her school and community. Michelle stated, "You find a need and you fill the need" which referred to the increased level of poverty within her school and

community and trying to find ways to meet the most fundamental needs of students and families. Gloria expressed, “Find beauty in everything and have a positive outlook in life,” which defined her worldview. She described how understanding her students’ cultures and helping them find pride in expressing themselves was a way to find beauty in the world. Brianna stated that her worldview evolved over time and that, “Everybody should do whatever makes them happy in life.” While describing herself as a positive person, she said maturity and learning about certain things helped her worldview evolve. In subsequent interviews, Brianna discussed how college is not for everyone, especially for some of her special education students, and that you can have a future without going to college and you should just do what makes you happy. While this may be perceived as a deficit view, given the fact that most students from wealthy White districts are expected to go to college, I do not believe that is what Brianna meant. She had discussed how her students often told her that they did not want to go to college and she just wanted them to find themselves and do what they love.

The evolution of worldviews matches the research of Tuan (1990), who posited that our bonds with places shape how we see our world. As he argued, “world view reflects the rhythms and constraints of the natural environment” (p. 79). In other words, as those rhythms are altered, the worldviews shift. The evolution of the participants’ worldviews also matches the research of Relph (1976) who suggested that places shape people’s individual and cultural identities and the way in which people see themselves within their world. The evolution of the worldview of five of the participants—Brianna, Gloria, Jane, Michelle, and Sally—seemed to match the changing demographics of the community.

All the participants, regardless of whether they felt their worldview changed over time, discussed how their life experiences helped form their worldview. Four spoke in detail as to

specific experiences that contributed to their worldview, whether those experiences were positive or negative. The educators' discussions of their worldview evolution also align with the theories behind place attachment, including the writings of Low and Altman (1992): "Place attachment contributes to individual, group, and cultural self-definition and integrity" (p. 4). In sum, the attachment that the participants had with their communities and their experiences within those communities helped shape who they are and how they see the world.

While the previous three research questions all explored worldview, the final research question explored the contrast in the school experiences between the educators and their current students and the reasons behind those differences.

How do educators describe the differences between their own school experience and the experiences of the students they teach?

All the participants, at some point in time, alluded to how technology has transformed the life experiences of their students. As children, the teachers had played outside, hung out at friends' houses; or frequented local restaurants, parks, beaches, bowling alleys, skating rinks, and movie theaters with their friends. These experiences are in sharp contrast to their current students, who are more likely to stay home and be absorbed in various forms of technology. As such, they believe their students are less likely to have either face-to-face contact with their friends or participate in real-world experiences. The shift in face-to-face interactions to communication through social media and other technology-based communication led some of the participants to believe that the bonds students have to the school, community, and each other has dramatically changed. Several discussed that the implication of the dependence on their devices means that their students' bonds are no longer with people or the community but, rather, with their devices. Thus, teachers believe that the change in communication style and a

preference for virtual experiences has impacted the daily lives of the students in school and in the community.

Four of the participants discussed a shift in responsibilities that has changed the experiences of students within the schools. For example, some specifically referred to older siblings who must take care of their younger siblings because the parents are working long hours to simply survive. Serving as caregiver has transformed the students' social and school experiences. As a result, the students' homework is often not completed due to their family duties. The fact that the students are acting as caregivers also limits their after-school activities. All the participants recounted various school activities that they were able to partake in, which helped foster their bonds with their schools and classmates. They believed that because of family obligations, some of their students are missing out on activities, which will affect how they form and retain bonds with the school.

In addition, five of the teachers discussed how a decrease in parent participation has impacted the school experiences of the students. The most common reason for a decrease in parental involvement, as argued by the educators, was due to the cost of living on Long Island. While older siblings serve as caregivers, parents are forced to work long hours or multiple jobs just to remain in the communities where they live. When the participants attended school years ago, many students had stay-at-home moms, but this is no longer the case. The two youngest teachers did not discuss the decrease in parental involvement, which was notable, especially since both spoke about having working mothers. While the participants proclaimed the decrease in parental involvement was due to economic issues, research has shown other reasons that seemed to be overlooked by the participants. Villavicencio et al. (2021) argued that "Educators often only legitimize the parenting practices of white middle-class families—attending teacher-

parent meetings, volunteering to chaperone…etc.-—while families that possess and draw on other forms of capital…appear 'disengaged.'" Therefore, the educators in this study appear to see the changes in family engagement from only one perspective, rather than the complex nature of these changes.

The change in demographics has also shifted the experiences of the students. With the growing number of ELLs, the participants discussed the need for translators, which did not exist when they were in school, or if it did, the participants stated, they did not notice it. All the participants, whether referring to parents or students, discussed how the language barrier has transformed the school experience for teachers, students, and parents alike. Villavicencio et al. (2021) agreed that the language barrier served as an obstacle for immigrant families interacting with schools due to the lack of bilingual staff and available translators. Not only has the demographics shifted the linguistic composition of school but also the way the participants view the schools.

When asked about their time in school, the educators described school as a home and a source of academic knowledge, friends, sports, clubs, and activities. Jane even stated, "I would tell you it's my home." However, when the teachers described the bond students have with the schools, they referred to it frequently as a safe haven, a place that provides students with attention and food that they may otherwise not get at home. Sally stated, "It's a safe haven for them. Some students come to school just to have at least two good meals…So, this is the only consistency in their lives." In contrast to their own school experience, the teachers never referred to school in this manner as a "safe haven" for themselves. There appeared to be a difference in the way they viewed their home lives and that of the students who are currently in their classrooms. This contrast in how school was viewed seems to reflect a deficit view of their

students' home lives, believing that their own homes growing up were stable and their parents could provide for their basic needs, while their current students' families cannot.

Additional Findings

In Chapter 4, the thematic analysis uncovered four overarching themes. Three themes that answered the research questions spoke directly to bonds within the community, family, school, and between people. However, the themes regarding changes in the school and community and bonds with people helping to foster future success did not directly answer the research question and are discussed further below.

Changes in the Community

All five communities have had a shift in both racial and linguistic diversity. As previously discussed, the rise in the Latinx population has brought with it an increase in Spanish-speaking community members and ELLs within the schools. The shift in racial diversity was not something that concerned the participants. However, the need for translators to facilitate communication between parents and students did serve as an area of frustration for some of the participants, including one who was bilingual. Moreover, the teachers' understanding of the changing demographics seemed to contradict the literature on teacher nostalgia completed by Goodson et al. (2006). Although their research described embittered teachers who did not want to change their way of teaching to meet the needs of the changing demographics, my research seemed to reflect the opposite. The teachers expressed pride in their schools and communities despite the changing demographics. A unique aspect of my research was exploring the long-time bonds the teachers had with their schools as a specific result of having been students within the districts they currently work. While the research of Goodson et al. focused on veteran teachers within schools that had undergone significant demographic changes, the veteran teachers in my

study remained within districts they had grown up in, leading them to appear to understand and make sense of the changes within the school better than those who simply worked within the district for a long time. The difference between views of the teachers in the Goodson et al. study and those in mine is possibly due to contact theory. Contact theory suggests that people who have constant contact with people of other races and cultures can reduce adverse attitudes toward others due to the ability to correct stereotypes that exist about those cultures and races (Hjem & Nagayoshi, 2011). Since six out of the seven participants continue to live in the communities in which they teach—the seventh lives in a community that reflects the diversity of the school in which she teaches—the educators' constant contact with the immigrant families they serve may reduce their negative attitudes toward the people who are changing the face of their schools and communities.

Racial and linguistic changes are not the only transformations that took place among some of the communities. Three of the towns had significant changes in either religious integration, development, or an influx of 'outsiders.' All three of these changes impacted the communities in different ways and all are discussed below.

Religious Shifts. In one of the communities the racial and linguistic diversity was second only to an increase in a religious population that does not send their children to the public schools. The teacher from that community described a form of segregation or isolation of this religious population from the rest of the community, as discussed in Chapter 4. It was this segregation that bothered the participant. She had great difficulty reconciling the changes in the community, especially the transformation of pillars in the community into religious institutions, including public schools. As she described, it was not the religion, but rather, the isolation of the religion from the rest of the community that troubled her most. She described a sense of family

that still existed amongst her students in the community, but they had no contact with the religious population and vice versa. As a result, the decline of the public school population, coupled with the deterioration of the conditions within the public schools, caused a great deal of sadness for the participant. I found the sense of sadness she felt to be palpable and consistent with the research of Fried (1963), who focused on measuring the levels of depression in people who were forced to relocate from their homes. Although this participant had chosen to leave the community, thinking back to the community as what it was when she lived there and what it has been transformed to now, she lamented the loss of the neighborhood she had once loved.

Development. Another one of the communities has been transformed from rural farmland to vineyards, housing, golf courses, and retail establishments. Although the two participants in this community are not grieving the loss of what they once knew, they are frustrated by the increased traffic and overcrowding of the schools. They are especially disheartened by the tax breaks that the real estate developers receive, leaving the schools to educate more students with less money. However, despite all the changes, their bond with the community remains strong. The literature on topophilia matches the strength in the bond the participants have with the community, despite the changes. As Tuan (1990) discussed, an awareness of the past is an important part of loving a specific place and loyalty to that place is a very powerful feeling that is not easily overcome.

Multi-Family Homes. One area of contention that arose in the interviews among five of the participants was the transformation of single-family homes and apartments into multi-family homes and apartments. Only Mary openly discussed her displeasure over the housing changes stating, “Now they have a room which should be illegal because this is not okay. You have these kids, sleeping with their parents’ room, sharing a kitchen, sharing a bathroom.” However, three

other participants alluded to their disapproval through their carefully chosen words while discussing the subject. While Jane discussed the need for families to live in multi-family homes due to the lack of affordable housing, three of the other participants appeared to disapprove of the housing arrangements many of their students reside in. Historically, suburban areas have disapproved of multi-family housing as a way to exclude immigrants, Blacks, and people of low-income from middle-class communities. Single-family zoning has been adopted by many town legislatures to preserve the class status of the communities they control (von Hoffman, 2021).

Gentrification. Finally, one of the communities has seen the increase in wealth from outsiders change the affordability of the hamlet, pricing long-time residents out of the area. The participant discussed how she was trying to reconcile the good that is brought with the influx of money, including the fixing up of rundown homes and a bustling downtown, with the forced migration of longtime natives to more affordable areas. In her eyes, the newcomers were outsiders or visitors, and she, along with the other longtime residents were natives. She felt that the visitors should take the time to understand the norms of the community and respect the natives. Tuan (1990) spoke about the difference in the viewpoints of natives and tourists.

> We may say that only the visitor (and particularly the tourist) has a viewpoint; his perception is often a matter of using his eyes to compose pictures. The native, by contrast, has a complex attitude derived from his immersion in the totality of the environment. (p. 63)

As her community continues to change, bridging the views of the visitors and the natives may continue to become more challenging, but is necessary to keep her bond with her community strong.

Bonds with Teachers

All of the participants discussed the influence that former teachers had on their becoming educators themselves. These positive experiences in schools and the bonds they formed within the schools helped shape their future. Although a few participants remembered teachers who were mean or whom they never bonded with, all overwhelmingly described having positive experiences that led to their future success. The bonds that were formed not only existed when they were students but also continued when they became teachers themselves, which gave the participants a level of comfort and a sense of home. People servings as a source of bonding within a place and providing a sense of home and a sense of security matches the research of Low and Altman (1992). These authors argued that place attachment links people with places and serves as a symbolic reminder of childhood. The importance of feeling a sense of home within a school and having positive experiences in schools are essential for teacher recruitment and retention efforts, especially in areas of high need.

Photos and Places as a Data Source

The use of photos and community tours unlocked vivid memories and data that did not materialize during the initial sit-down interview. While I was able to obtain data about the participants' pasts and discuss their worldviews and that of their students, our conversation was less personal, lacking the intimacy of the bonds the participants truly felt around their schools and communities. In some ways, the teachers' responses to the interview questions appeared rehearsed or controlled, rather than natural and heartfelt. In viewing the photos, the emotions of the bonds the participants felt with their schools, communities, families, and friends became far more explicit than in the first sit-down interview. The photos opened sensory elements in the participants minds that conversations alone did not allow. Using the community tour further

enhanced memories, thoughts, and sentiments about the bonds and changes within the communities. Being in the place that the educators were discussing unleased emotions that simple conversations did not evoke. Furthermore, it allowed me, as the researcher, to contextualize the data and experience the changes the participants were discussing. I was able to enter their lived experiences in a way that simple interview questions alone would not have permitted. Without the integration of photos and community tours, the findings of this study would have lacked important data necessary to understand the place attachment and worldviews of the participants.

While all these findings are significant in understanding place attachment and worldview, it is also important to understand their implications for practice. In the next section, I explain the impact that bonds with schools and communities can have on the field of education.

Implication for Practice

The findings of this study have several implications in the field of education. First, the participants discussed the difference that school staff vested in the community can make. Second, recruiting and retaining staff members is necessary for stability within schools. In addition, overcoming the language barrier between schools and the families they serve is essential to bridge the gap between homes and schools. Finding ways to address the looming teacher shortage through the recruitment of community members into GYO programs is a final implication for practice. While some of these findings can immediately produce solutions to problems, others are long-term remedies.

A Need for a Vested Interest in the Community

Although one of the school districts, according to the participants, still had many administrators and staff members who continue to live in the community, the other four towns

did not. The participants in those four communities spoke about how changes in administration led to changes in the culture of the schools and reflected a lack of vested interest in the community. Three of the educators spoke about their experience in school when the administrators and teachers lived locally. They described how the staff had a vested interest and did all that they could to make the school district the best it could be. Once that vested interest was lost, however, the administration became a revolving door of individuals, trying to put their mark on the schools with their own ideas before leaving for better pay, without taking time to understand the community. Although it is not feasible for all staff and administrators to live within the communities in which they work, taking the time to understand the community and school before changes are made is an attainable goal. Creating incentives for administrators to remain within the same district may improve the consistency in leadership that the participants desired. Requiring administrators to participate in community activities, especially superintendents, may be one way to return the vested interest that the participants felt has been lost through the lack of locals in the staffing of their schools. The expectation that superintendents become more active members of the communities within the districts they serve can easily be phased in and would be a solution today for an ongoing perceived disconnect between administrators and schools.

Recruitment and Retention

The research on GYO shows how recruiting people within the community can make a difference in the understanding of students and the retainment of teachers who have a vested interest in the schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, GYO programs recruit community members or high school students to enter teacher-preparation programs so they can return to serve their communities (Skinner, 2011). Although the research on GYO programs does not necessarily

investigate changing demographics within communities, it does often relate to a shortage of bilingual teachers, which all the districts in this study would benefit from.

Recruitment of teachers is not enough. Retention of staff is essential to establishing stability within school districts. Gist et al. (2019) indicated that teachers who become certified through GYO programs have higher retention rates than those who do not. This very well may relate back to the research on place attachment and topophilia, and the data from the participants who spoke of a vested interest that locals have in their schools. Schools, especially those with teacher shortages, may look to GYO programs to improve recruitment and retention of teachers. The teachers' bonds and attachment to the school and community may lead to career-long investments in the school community. It is important to note that GYO programs are a long-term solution to an on-going problem within school systems.

Pre-Service and In-Service training on Worldview

Although GYO programs are a step in the right direction in recruiting and retaining diverse teaching candidates, increasing a teacher's self-awareness of their own worldview is also important. GYO programs may provide diverse candidates in terms of race and linguistic background, but these teaching candidates must also understand their own worldview so they can understand the worldview of their students, no matter where they come from. In addition, GYO programs do not address the systemic problem in training that both pre-service and in-service teachers receive in meeting the multicultural needs of their students. As previously stated, teachers must understand who they are as cultural beings before they can understand their students. Although many teacher-education programs offer one multicultural education class, it only offers a broad perspective on the many cultural differences educators will face in the classroom. Rarely do these classes have the students look at themselves and understand who they

are before trying to understand others. One long-term solution to address the changing demographics of American schools is to require teacher-preparation programs to offer a class on worldview, cultural understanding, and cultural self-reflection. Offering in-service staff development on the topic may be more complicated, as teacher contracts, state requirements, and local control over schools may put constraints on such training.

A Need to Overcome the Language Barrier

All the participants in the study, at some point in time, spoke about the challenges that an increased bilingual school population presents. The most common need, expressed by the participants regarding the changing demographics, was an increase in translators to aid in the communication between teachers, parents, and students. In the five communities I explored, Spanish was overwhelmingly the most common home language, other than English. The teachers who did not speak Spanish felt fortunate that within their classrooms, there was generally another student who could help translate, when necessary. However, the teachers who did speak Spanish, worried about their students when they left the comfort of their classrooms where they could easily communicate and switched to rooms where they would not be understood. Although New York State requires a bilingual education program to be instituted in any district that has twenty students at the same grade level who speak the same language, they do not require all staff who educate these students to be bilingual (C.R. Subpart 154-2, 2015).

The language barrier did not just affect student–teacher interactions but also parent–teacher relationships. Increasing the number of bilingual staff on Long Island in all schools, regardless of the number of ELLs within a school or district, may very well help increase the parental participation that the participants discussed had been in decline. Although the participants felt the decrease in parental participation was due to the increase in working parents

and the long hours they worked, the language barrier the parents experience while entering the school may also be a contributing factor in the lack of participation. If the participants expressed their frustration in the difficulty in communicating with parents due to a language barrier, it is logical to believe that parents are experiencing the same frustration with teachers and other staff when entering the school.

The availability of telephone-translation services, such as Propio, provides an immediate solution to the language barrier. On Long Island, the service is Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) reimbursable, and as such, is available to all districts who are members of BOCES at a reduced rate. Since Propio offers interpreters in 350 different languages, linguistic shifts in communities can be supported, no matter the language. However, encouraging linguistic diversity within teacher education programs would be a long-term solution to the shifting linguistic make-up of American classrooms. In addition, encouraging students and families to maintain their home language would produce a further pool of future linguistically diverse teachers.

Strategies to Address Teacher Shortages

There have been numerous news reports of a severe teacher shortage, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To put these reports into exact numbers, the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) reported that as of January 2022, 44% of public school reported having at least one teaching vacancy, with special education positions having the largest number of vacancies. It also stated that 50% of teaching vacancies were due to resignation and 61% of schools reported that at least one vacancy was the direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In New York State, there is a shortage of teachers in specific certification areas, including special

education, bilingual education, and bilingual special education, among other areas. Shortages of teachers overall exist in high-needs districts throughout the state (Zweig et al., 2021).

The teachers in this study all discussed the strong bond with the schools in which they worked and recalled wonderful childhood experiences within the school district they currently work. Six out of the seven discussed the vested interest they have in seeing the schools succeed because they live in the community and can relate to the students. School districts can begin programs, similar to GYO programs, that will entice high school students to go into the field of teaching, especially in the areas of teacher shortages within their own districts. As the demographics on Long Island shift and bilingual Spanish classrooms become necessary due to state law, recruiting bilingual Spanish-speaking students into the field of education will help build a stronger base of bilingual educators, whether they land in bilingual classrooms or not. Most of the participants in this study discussed that teachers and educators need to understand the community in which they work. GYO high school programs would address teacher shortages while employing teachers who understand the community, school, and students. However, GYO programs, by no means, would be an immediate solution to the shortage of bilingual teachers. GYO programs would have to be put in place as a long-range goal for anticipated shortages over time.

Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout the interviews, topics arose that could benefit from future research. Some of these areas of future research were directly stated by the participants, while others were inferred based on the data. Also, through my multimodal approach to phenomenological research, I was able to see the benefits of going beyond the traditional interview to collect data, which could be

an asset to future qualitative research studies. The following section discusses these topics for future research.

Community Bonds in Urban and Suburban Areas

The difference in community bonds between those living in the suburbs and those living in urban areas was an intriguing topic that came up in a couple of the interviews. The participants believed living in the suburbs created stronger community bonds and bonds between people than those living in the city. The participants mentioned that living in a small town allows everyone to know everyone and felt that this did not exist in urban settings. They also cited community schooling, where you attend schools with your neighbors, as creating stronger bonds than those in cities that foster school choice. Exploring place attachment in urban versus suburban areas and the reason behind that attachment is an unexplored area in the research and may uncover data that can later be applied to schools, especially around the debate over community schooling.

Perceptions of Parental Involvement and Language Barriers

An unexpected observation that occurred during this study involved the differences in the views of parental involvement based on the age of the participant and teaching experience. The two youngest teachers, whose parents were immigrants to this country, worked full-time, and were Spanish-speakers, did not discuss a decrease in parental involvement in the school. They did discuss how their parents worked hard and that they only spoke Spanish in the home.

As the other five participants discussed the decrease in parental involvement, their reasoning revolved around parents' need to work and the expensive nature of living on Long Island. The two youngest, whose parents worked full-time while they were in school, seemed to better understand the need for parents to work. Although the five most experienced participants did not specifically discuss their own parents' involvement in the school, they spoke about

events where all the parents came out, or many parents helped. The two youngest participants did not speak of parental involvement at all, in the past or present tense. Therefore, a study that involved teacher perceptions of parental involvement based on the age and experience of teachers may help provide insight as to how to get more parents involved in schools. A study of this nature may also allow educators to see what parental involvement means for today's schools. Schools may need to revise traditional views of parental involvement (PTA events, attendance at school-day events, volunteering in the classroom, participation in school projects) so that working parents can feasibly become more involved in their children's education.

The participants in the study attributed a decrease in parental involvement with the need for parents to work. While the educators acknowledged a language barrier with the parents and the difficulty in communicating with parents who do not speak English, they did not express the language barrier as a contributing factor in their perceived decrease in parental involvement. Also, they did not consider the cultural expectations Americans have for parental involvement in schools versus what the immigrant parents' school experiences were in their native countries. Research that examines language and cultural barriers in schools for immigrant families may provide insight as to how to better involve immigrant families in their children's schools. In addition, it may provide effective ways to bridge the gap between the students' home culture and expectations of the schools, with that of the school system itself.

Technology and Bonds with People and Places

One common sentiment by the participants in the study was that technology devices such as cell phones and tablets have changed the way students communicate with one another. Rather than having face-to-face conversations, the students have conversations over devices. As previously discussed, one participant exclaimed, "Their bond is with their iPhones and social

media." Examining how technology changes students' bonds with communities, schools, and people may help educators meet the needs of their students. Depending on the results of the research, schools could reexamine how they teach children to communicate with one another at an early age. Taking the focus off devices and switching it to a concentration on group work that requires oral communication with fellow students may help students redevelop those bonds that the participants fear the younger generation are losing due to the overreliance on tech devices.

Applications of Non-Traditional Data-Collection Methods

In the present study, I incorporated participant-provided photos, artifacts (awards, newspaper clippings, yearbooks), and integrated community tours to elicit memories and more authentic answers to interview questions. While interviews are popular in qualitative research, photos and community tours are less commonplace. The data that I was able to obtain through the photos and community tours was far more authentic and relevant than that through the stand-alone interview. In addition, being able to see things with my own eyes allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the participants' lived experiences. One participant took me on a tour of her school during the community tour, which led her to relive her time in school and elicited memories that even the photovoice interview did not produce. After that interview, I wished I had included a school tour with all the participants. For future research involving place attachment for teachers, I would incorporate a school tour to enhance the data collection and understand the bond with the school more completely. Incorporating alternative forms of data collection in future qualitative research may produce more robust results and should be considered by researchers. Although there is research on the value of the use of photos, drawings, and walking interviews (Boden et al., 2019; Evans & Jones, 2011; Liebenberg, 2018;

Wang & Burris 1997), their application to the majority qualitative research is somewhat limited but can be very beneficial.

Conclusion

As part of a multimodal qualitative investigation, I examined the place attachment educators feel to their school and community when they return to the school districts they attended as children to teacher. Also, I explored how that attachment informed their worldview and the understanding of the worldviews of others. The place attachment and topophilia that the teachers experienced matched the research on the subject (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1990). In addition, the formation of the participants' worldviews was influenced by their cultural experiences within their homes and communities, which again was supported by the research (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). The goal of my study was to examine teachers' worldview through the lens of place attachment and changing linguistic demographics within schools. However, the results of the study can be applied more broadly. For example, districts that have historically had racially diverse populations can look to the pool of potential teachers within their student body to ensure an understanding of the school and community, while maintaining a staff with vested interest in school districts. The participants' experiences in what they perceived as diverse childhood school districts appeared to prepare them for the linguistically diverse student population they currently teach, matching the research on segregated schools and contradicting the research on teacher nostalgia. Last, the findings of this study can help school districts with increasingly diverse populations understand how bonds that teachers hold with their districts and community benefit both school and student outcomes.

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Appendix A

Molloy College

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Kathleen Maurer Smith, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Academic Affairs
T: 516.323.3801
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DATE: February 8, 2022

TO: Kathleen Murray, Doctoral Candidate
FROM: Molloy College IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1871887-1] Seeing the World through Their Eyes: The Impact of Place Attachment on Understanding Worldviews
REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: February 8, 2022

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Molloy College IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. However, exempt research activities are subject to the same human subject protections and ethical standards as outlined in the Belmont Report.

You may proceed with your project.

This acknowledgement expires within three years- unless there is a change to the protocol.

Though this protocol does not require annual IRB review, the IRB requires an annual report of your exempt protocol (Expedited and Exempt Research Protocol Annual Report Form) which is available on the IRB webpage.

If there is a proposed change to the protocol, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to inform the Molloy College IRB of any requested changes before implementation. A change in the research may change the project from EXEMPT status and requires prior communication with the IRB.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Eckardt at 516-323-3711 or peckardt@molloy.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN

Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Molloy College IRB's records.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1st Interview-Sit-Down Oral Interview

The purpose of this interview is to examine how educators who return to their childhood schools understand how their bond with their school and community helped inform their worldviews and their understanding of the worldviews of their students. This, the first in a series of three interviews, is meant to understand your lived experience as an educator returning to teach in your childhood school where there has been an increase in linguistic and racial diversity.

Introduction

1. Can you describe your current position and where you teach?
2. How long have you been teaching in this district?
    a. (Probe) Where did you teach prior to this experience?
3. What led you to return to teach in the district you attended as a child?
    a. (Probe) What was it like when you first returned?
4. Do you have any English language learners in your classroom?
    a. (Probe) How many of your students are ELLs?

School Experiences/Place Attachment

1. What was your experience like when you were a student in the district where you currently teach?
    a. (Probe) How long did you attend this district?
2. How would you describe your attachment or bond to this school/district?
    a. (Probe) What feelings does the school/district bring forth for you?

3. How do your childhood experiences in this school/district and in the community compare to those of your students?
    a. (Probe) What bond or attachment do you feel your students have with the school and community?
    b. (Probe) How is your students bond the same or different from the bond that you have with the school/district?
    c. (Probe) What factors influence your students' bond with the school/district?

Worldview

4. How would you describe your cultural identity?
5. How would you describe the cultural identity of your students?
6. Worldview refers to attitudes, beliefs, values, and the lens in which you view your world. How would you describe your worldview?
    a. (Probe) Some societies are individualist, believing that individual achievement has the greatest role in society, while others are collectivist, meaning the goals of the community are more important than the individual. Which worldview was impressed upon you by your family?

       By your school?

       By your community?
7. Looking at your students, do you feel they share your worldview?
    a. (Probe) Why or why not?
8. How do you develop a greater understanding of your students' worldviews?
9. Has your worldview changed or evolved over time?
    a. (Probe) What influenced this change?

Changing Demographics

10. How have the demographics of the district changed since you were a student?
    a. (Probe) How has the linguistic diversity of the students changed since you attended this school/district?
    b. (Probe) How has the racial diversity of the students changed since you attended this school/district?
11. What have these changes meant for your teaching?
    a. (Probe) What cultural differences between you and your students influence the way they experience school?
    b. (Probe) Do you speak a second language? How does speaking a second language affect your students in your classroom?
    c. (Probe) How does your ability/inability to speak a second language influence your understanding of your students' needs?
12. What feelings are brought forth when you think about how the school has changed since you attended?
    a. (Probe) What changes do you view in a positive light?
    b. (Probe) What changes do you view in a negative light?

Interview Protocol

2nd Interview- Photovoice Integration

The purpose of this second interview is to gain a greater understanding of how photos of your school and community can help you to describe the experiences of your past and present regarding your worldview and bond with your school and community.

Introduction

1. How was the experience of finding photos from when you were in school?
    a. (Probe) How did you feel when you were looking at the photos you found?
    b. (Probe) What sensory elements were brought forth as you found the photos?
        i. What sounds or music did you remember from the time?
        ii. Did the photos bring forth any smells or tastes that brought you back to the experience?

Photo Examination

2. How do you describe what is happening in this photo?
    a. (Probe) What feelings does it emit?
    b. (Probe) What sensory experiences do you remember (smells, tastes, sounds, sights)
3. How would you describe the influence this experience had on your worldview?
    a. (Probe) Why was this experience important in your life?

Historic Events

4. Looking at this historic event in the community, can you describe what is happening?
    a. (Probe) Does this reflect a change in the community, or is it something that is typical?

5. Are there other events in the community that helped form who you are today?
    a. (Probe) What sensory experiences do you remember from those events (sounds, sights, smells, tastes)

Interview Protocol

3rd Interview- Community Walk

The purpose of this third interview is to understand how your community helped inform your worldview and the worldview of others.

Introduction

1. Where are we?
    a. (Probe) Why was it important for us to start the walk here?

Important Sites

2. Can you describe the location we are at now?
3. What significance does this place have in your childhood?
    a. (Probe) What feelings does this location emit?
    b. How has this location changed or remained the same?
        i. (Sensory) Does it look, smell, or sound the same?
        ii. (Change) What is your feeling towards this change?
4. What impact did this place have on how you view the world we live in?
5. Where else should we go if we were to retrace the formation of your childhood identity?
6. (Repeat questions 1-5 for each location)
7. What aspects of your community are the same and what have changed since your childhood?
    a. (Probe) How does this change, or status quo make you feel?
    b. (Probe) What else do you hope changes?
    c. (Probe) What do you hope stays the same?