

MACEDONIAN AND U.S. STUDENTS
IN A PRE-SERVICE TEACHING CULTURAL EXCHANGE:
EXAMINING THE FORMATION OF PERSPECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

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...if we are to admit the humanness of those others, then the strangeness of their ways must become less strange, must in fact, become believable. Ideally, that means getting inside the heads of those strangers and looking out at the world through their eyes.

(Robert Hanvey on *Perspective Consciousness*, 1987, p. 165)

Abstract

Through a pre-service teacher cultural exchange, the authors trace the development of a global perspective, working specifically within Hanvey's concept of *perspective consciousness*.¹ From qualitative observations, interviews and written reflections, the data of four education students who traveled to Macedonia from the United States and five education students who traveled to the U.S. from their country of Macedonia, the data demonstrate how perspective consciousness emerged across three themes: *resources*, *religion*, and *political* consciousness. Looking across these themes, the authors present conclusions about the conditions that may foster or hinder perspective consciousness, such as substantive knowledge about a place, seeking common ground (rather than differences), and at times putting one's own deepest beliefs aside. The data hold several implications for fostering a global perspective in colleges of education and especially within their global exchange programs, adding current findings to Hanvey's and Merry Merryfield's claims about attaining a global perspective.²

Introduction

In the entrance to a college of education at a large research institution, educators and students pass by a sign daily that encourages each of them to "Be a global citizen!" The sign recently piqued our curiosity as we, two social studies teacher educators, embarked on a global exchange with two groups of education majors: four education majors from our large research and teacher-preparation institution and five from a

university in Macedonia. In the context of the exchange, we wondered: *what does it mean to have a global outlook on the world and can we as social studies educators foster it in our teacher-education program?* We set out to examine one particular component of global-mindedness: *perspective consciousness*, or the ability to imagine perspective through others' lenses, as we led these students in the two-part global exchange.

In a seminal piece, *An Attainable Global Perspective*, Hanvey outlines five components for achieving global mindedness.³ These five components include: state-of-the-planet awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, awareness of human choice, and, finally, perspective consciousness. Many scholars have grappled with the explanation of what is required in obtaining these components of a *global perspective*.⁴ The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education has included in their teacher preparation guidelines, the attainment of a *global perspective*, and the National Council for the Social Studies has also added it to their curricular guidelines.⁵ Despite these growing theoretical frameworks and increasing demands for teachers to teach for equity, diversity, and global interconnectedness, Merry Merryfield reports from a major study of over eighty teacher educators that colleges of education are not producing teachers with such knowledge and skills, while others report that youth in the U.S. are less culturally literate than youth in many other industrialized countries.⁶ Part of the issue may be that it is not known what is being assessed, or how to foster it. If Hanvey's widely referenced conceptual model of a global perspective is used, the presumption is that teacher education programs *can* in fact cultivate the elements of global perspective, including one of its five components, *perspective consciousness*.⁷

This is particularly compelling when considering the two dimensions of a *global perspective* which have been defined by key scholars of global education -- the *substantive* dimension and the *perceptual* dimension.⁸ Scholars have noted that four of Hanvey's five elements are of the *substantive* dimension as they involve the mastery of relevant factual knowledge of the world, such as various features of the world and how they work.⁹ The substantive dimension seems straightforward enough: to learn and teach within an education program. The *perceptual* dimension, on the other hand, implicates one's orientation or outlook on the world, and *perspective consciousness* is the only one of Hanvey's components of global perspective that lies within this dimension. Thus the unique nature of this component generates a particular interest, especially in terms of students' experiences in a new country and the possibility of fostering such an outlook.

Hanvey defines *perspective consciousness* as:

The recognition... on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared, that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one's own.¹⁰

R. Case and J.R. Coombs have further defined *perspective consciousness* as the ability to speak from many different perspectives on a single object or issues. Merryfield adds a similar, yet more critically-focused description: *understanding a marginalized point of view*.¹¹ One person may have multiple points of view, positioned from various interest groups such as religions, ethnicities, citizenships, political orientations, cultures, and even genders; yet those who achieve perspective consciousness are able to think and speak

outside of their own perspective. Scholars in global education believe that the future rests on the abilities of young people to interact effectively with and understand the perspective of people different from themselves.¹² A small body of scholarship is concerned with improving actual face-to-face experiences with diverse populations particularly in global-exchange projects.¹³

If globally-mindedness is indeed vital for those who will be teaching future citizens of an increasingly interconnected world: *What does it look like and how do we know it has occurred? What conditions may foster and impede its development? How might such data help educators plan for such experiences?* These questions guide the study. Becoming conscious of one's own perspective, and demonstrating the ability to consider others', remains a broad requirement for educators, and worthy of the current inquiry.

This article explores the range of possibilities and specific scenarios in which perspective consciousness unfolds, giving clarity to what the process can actually look like and where it falls short. It offers three themes of perspective consciousness and puts forth conclusions about some ideal circumstances that may foster perspective consciousness within teacher-education programs, particularly within global exchange projects. This study is most relevant for educators interested in fostering a global perspective and those who lead students in cross-cultural or global exchange projects.

Project Description

The purpose of the trip, supported by the Fund for the Advancement of Peace and Education, was to foster intercultural understanding between two groups of pre-service teachers by visiting an overseas country. The four U.S. students and five ethnic Albanian Macedonian students spent twenty days with one another both as guests and hosts in one

another's countries, classrooms and homes^{*}. During the visit, the group observed educational settings at all levels (elementary through university) in both Macedonia and the U.S., and conversed afterwards on educational issues that arose, as well as other experiences.

The first group of undergraduate education majors was chosen from a large Midwestern university through a blind review of essay applications and subsequent interviews with project coordinators[†]. The students selected came from a variety of disciplines within the school of education -- two elementary education majors named Melanie and Eric; one special education major, Miah; and one music education major, Leah.[‡] Two of these students, Melanie and Leah, had never left the U.S., while the other two, Eric and Miah, had traveled considerably. Miah was a Pakistani international student who grew up and attended school, K-12, mostly in England. The religious diversity and background of the U.S. group is of importance as the data will demonstrate: Miah was a Sunni Muslim; Leah was an active and practicing Christian and grew up in Michigan; Melanie, who grew up in Ohio, described herself as a non-practicing Catholic; Eric was raised Jewish in a suburb of Chicago, but also reported that he is not currently practicing Judaism. Before their departure for Macedonia, the U.S. students read several articles and two books about Macedonian and ethnic-Albanian history and relations. With two project co-coordinators/researchers, these students traveled to Macedonia for ten days in December 2004.

^{*} This is with the exception of the U.S. international student from Pakistan, Miah, who hosted the SEEU students in the country of her university, not of her origin.

[†] Some criteria of selection included evidence that they had a desire to learn, had a personal inquiry about the place, and good student standing.

[‡] Students' names are all pseudonyms.

In March 2005, five Macedonian university students, also chosen through blind-review essays and interviews, traveled to the Midwestern United States for ten days. Four of these students were ethnic-Albanians and one was ethnic-Albanian, Bosnian and Turkish. All of them grew up near Tetovo, Macedonia, and practiced the Muslim faith. These students, Haji, Mini, Kira and Joanna, were studying secondary education. Two of them, Haji and Mini, had traveled to Western Europe, including Italy, England, and France. For all of them, this trip was their first to the United States and overseas in general. Although their passports read *Macedonian*, these students all identified themselves as ethnic-Albanians or ethnic-Turk. To them, the boundary lines drawn around ethnic Albanians and Turks, again and again over thousands of years, seem as arbitrary as their political identity as “Macedonian.”

Together these students represent a group that is nearly 30 percent of the Macedonian population.¹⁴ Since the break-up of the former Yugoslavian republic in 1991, there have been many violent outbreaks between the Macedonian majority group and ethnic-Albanian minority group. The Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 granted ethnic-Albanians rights to open private universities in the Albanian language.¹⁵ These five students all attended Southeastern European University (SEEU), a private university in Macedonia set up to provide higher educational access especially to ethnic-Albanians in their native tongue. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) partnership between to assist in the creation of a teacher education program, among other academic goals, at the latter institution.

The short and intense visits included participation in university, primary, and secondary school classes while staying in the homes of community members, students,

and faculty. In particular, the U.S. students participated in cultural activities such as visiting historic sites, religious grounds, the country's capital city, Skopje; dining with the families of students; and attending a community-wide poetry reading. The community activities for the ethnic-Albanian students included a welcoming reception at the university, a barbeque with university students and faculty, a jazz concert, museums, an IMAX theater, shopping, and dining with university students and faculty. The ethnic-Albanian students visited three elementary schools, and two high schools and attended two undergraduate class meetings of "Teaching in a Pluralistic Society." Each group had a full schedule of events and a number of focus-group reflections, all of which comprise this study's data on perspective consciousness.

Methods and Data Analysis

According to J. Green and V. Caracelli, multiple methods can be used to illuminate a particular idea, get a closer, in-depth understanding of it, and "invite the juxtaposition of opposed or contradictory ideas".¹⁶ The authors here used multiple methods to explore research questions, better understand perspective consciousness, and triangulate multiple sources around it so both trends and contradictions can be identified. The multiple methods of data collection utilized in this project included field notes recorded throughout the project, semi-structured individual, and group interviews and informal debriefing sessions, and, written reflections by each student participant.

In the initial interviews, conducted during the ten-day period in which the students were in the host country, students were asked to generally describe their experience in the new country, what surprised them, what comforted or discomforted them, and what they were learning from the experience in the new culture. The open-

ended questions allowed for further probing on a wide range of topics. The topics mentioned in audio-recorded group interviews and conversations in class debates, class discussions, and informal debriefing sessions also served as a springboard for further exploration. For the U.S. participants, an individual follow-up interview was also conducted within a month after their return. E-mails with individual Ethnic-Albanian participants were used as post-experience data. After the conclusion of their exchanges, students from both countries wrote a reflection describing “what they saw and what they learned.” The authors hoped to gather from these data how and when students reflected on their own perspective.

We consider this a *two-case study* because the participants were each a part of two diverse, and at times opposing experiences, both as hosts and as guests in their own country and a new one.¹⁷ The two groups’ cases are occasionally presented as comparative or contrasting, but as the authors coded the data, they considered sets of data (individual and group interviews, field notes, debriefing, and written reflections) part of a greater whole.

To analyze *perspective consciousness*, the moments when one sees their own perspective anew, three semiotic concepts of *self-consciousness*, or self-awareness, were useful in examining the concept. First, the authors combed the data for *reflexivity* by asking, how has this person reconsidered her or his own perspective or seen herself or himself in a new way?¹⁸ Second, they looked for moments when a student revealed a *Generalized Other* and to uncover this they asked, to what ‘ideal other(s)’ does this person justify what is right or wrong?¹⁹ Did the student report or demonstrate that his or her ability to understand theirs and the others’ justifications changed (even weakened or

lessened), evolved or expanded? Last, the authors examined instances of *solidarity* to bring forth the grounds on which a student was connected to others, and if the student reported or demonstrated a shift or expansion in those with whom they find solidarity.²⁰

Indeed, Hanvey describes this ability of opening ourselves to reconsideration as the primary reason for cross-cultural awareness:

if we are to admit the humanness of those others, then the strangeness of their ways must become less strange, must in fact, become believable. Ideally, that means getting inside the heads of those strangers and looking out at the world through their eyes.²¹

Having a new perspective on an issue is the process of seeing it anew from another's eyes, using *reflexivity* to reconsider truth, and expand or confront one's *generalized other* while enlarging to achieve *solidarity* with this other.

As these narratives, are examined the way in which identity and contexts of power are understood shape how experiences are relayed and interpreted. Although Mead's notion of the generalized other can be interpreted as more fixed, the authors frame the accounts presented here as having no essentialist or fixed meaning.²² The moments presented are part of the more dynamic nature of discourse that changes over time and is quite complex. Thus, as we present a sample of the participants' lived experiences are discussed, these narratives are framed as performative and in no way capable of encompassing a complete story.

Furthermore, as the idea of perspective consciousness by taking on another's perspective is examined it, should be recognized that one's perspective exists within and is bound by their own socio-cultural perspective, and eliminating that completely is impossible. However, there are moments when it is possible to step outside of the

ordinary, the taken-for-granted, and the usual to reconsider the way in which one has thought or behaved in the past.²³

From low-level (naming instances of perspective consciousness with broad descriptors) and high-level (more specific meanings backed up with alternative analyses via horizon analysis) coding scheme of the qualitative data, three salient themes arose on the students' experiences with perspective consciousness:²⁴

- **Religious Consciousness:** Students reflected on their perceptions of others' faiths and their own.
- **Political and Ethnic Consciousness:** Students reflected on their perspective in terms of viewing the world from a certain political or ethnic perspective.
- **Resource Consciousness:** Students reconsidered their own (material and financial) resource usage and availability.

Results: Cases of Perspective Consciousness

The following sections present data that exemplifies these themes. For the most part, the first section begins with the experiences of the U.S. students and then describes the theme in terms of the Macedonian students' experience.

Religious Perspectives

Both groups of students confronted several scenarios of diverse religious values. In early interviews, three of the four U.S. students commented that people avoided sensitive issues such as the armed conflict between the largely Islamic ethnic-Albanians and the largely Orthodox Christian Macedonians. They were interested in the large Christian cross which was put on top of a hill overlooking the country's capital of Skopje, a cross that caused much turmoil among Muslim ethnic-Albanians, and other recent

historical tensions. The U.S. students were anxious to actually talk to the people in Macedonia about these occurrences, but, initially, within the first half of their ten-day stay, they reported that they were surprised that “no one was talking about these controversies that we’d read about.”

Although they were eager to talk about ethnic-Albanian and Macedonian’ issues, two of the U.S. students themselves seemed to avoid conversations about their most personal affiliations. While staying in the home of an ethnic Albanian-Muslim student, Leah reported that she did not even open her Bible in the evening as she usually does to read and pray. When asked what she would think if the Muslim family was to get out the Koran to read while she is in the room, she said, “It would be good and bad because when something is that close to people’s hearts, they just put up that wall.” Leah entered the situation believing that religion would be an issue that would divide, rather than unite them. Data shows that she may have left with the same assumption.

In a somewhat similar vein, Eric “didn’t mention the fact” that he was Jewish in case the Macedonians would, according to him, “say something negative at the fact because it seems like all over the world there is a prejudice against Jews.” Data on Eric, however, later shows a change in this assumption. Both Eric and Leah were initially eager to hear from their hosts about controversial issues of religion, but did not reveal their own religious identity because it could be a source controversy or division.

An experience during the middle of their stay further captured the group members’ diverse responses to religious views unlike their own. The group from the U.S. took a tour of the living quarters of the Harabati Baba Bektashi tekke, or religious grounds, in Tetovo. Bektashi is a Sufi order and a liberal sect of Islam associated with

traditionally Shi'ite concepts.²⁵ With the help of a South East European University (SEEU) instructor as a translator, the Baba (Tahir Emini), the head of the tekke, who is qualified to give spiritual guidance, explained his sect of the Muslim faith that holds non-violence as one of its highest virtues along with a liberal interpretation of Islam's the five pillars (faith, fasting, performing Hajj, giving to others, praying). Baba Emini informed us that part of his sect was to be at peace and harmony with those around you and to "respect the way in which others find God." He gave the group a personal tour of the grounds, including the covered burial spot of one of the holy Mohammed's relatives. After this, his wife served Turkish tea and biscuits in their home, while the students sat and conversed with him. Baba Emil treated the group like friends or people of his own following.

After the experience, Eric reconsidered his past conceptions of the Muslim faith in an individual interview, "From what's portrayed in the U.S. media, I've only seen negative aspects of Islam. It's all about differences especially with Israeli and Arab relations....But he [the Bektashi Baba] made me have a different view on this religion." Eric felt at ease and welcomed by the Muslim cleric. He reported connecting with what Baba Emini said about "being at peace and how everyone finds God in a different way." Eric was so moved by this experience that he wrote about it in his reflections and spoke about the Baba in interviews over seven times. Eric mentioned how impressed he was that the Baba took the initiative of demonstrating acceptance of other's beliefs. Without dismissing his Judaism, he inquired about the Bektashi Muslim religion while realizing the source of his past misconceptions of the Muslim faith were obtained, which he

reported was, “from the U.S. media.” Eric reported that he “never imagined” finding a sort of solidarity with the Muslim faith.

Miah, a Sunni Muslim, also felt that it was an honor to be there and commented on Bektashi’s commitment to non-violence. In an individual interview, she pointed out the similarities between their sects, and stated that Bektashi Muslims merely “focus on different elements of the whole (Muslim faith)... There are a lot of them [elements] but they tend to focus more strongly on one of the elements.... I was interested in hearing their perspective on Islam.... In general, I was thinking, we are in such a beautiful, historic, and sacred place.” For both Eric and Miah, the Baba Emini’s acceptance of their beliefs was important in helping to expand their perspectives.

This experience for Melanie, the non-practicing Catholic, reminded her of how she found it an honor when she got to visit the priest’s rectory when she was a young Catholic school student. Through making this cultural parallel, she reported she found herself, “very comfortable” there. She further stated, “As a Catholic, I’ve never been persecuted or discriminated against. I’ve never experienced violence like that [referring to the evidence of recent bombing and shooting of the tekke].” After visiting the Bektashi tekke herself, living with a Muslim family, and making friends with people of this faith, she reported, in an individual interview and again in her final written reflection, that she looked again at her past single perspective “as a Catholic” and said she was able to empathize more with a minority group that had been discriminated against.

However, not all students demonstrated as much reflexivity in their perspective consciousness. Leah, the devout Christian who earlier hesitated to read the Bible as usual, remained insulated during the experience at the tekke and in subsequent reflections on it.

When asked how she felt at the Bektashi tekke, she responded, “Weird.” When asked her, “Weird, how?” she responded, “Weird like it freaked me out. I felt kind of sick.” Upon further probing, she further described her discomfort, “It’s just weird because it’s like so foreign to me and not just that but obviously it goes *against* what I believe.” This was not unlike many times during the week when Leah reported being “offended” by something or somebody she felt went against the Bible. In these moments, field notes show that she sat with her hands folded, her lips pursed, and often avoided eye-contact.

Afterwards, Leah reported that, since having traveled abroad, she has a stronger desire to do Christian “mission trips” and to talk about Christianity to others. She reported no change in her religious perspective but noted her increased ability to respect others, “Because I guess that everything this experience has just solidified and confirmed what I already felt and made me that much stronger in my faith and at the same time more able to respect people who believe things differently, you know, those who look and speak and act differently.” It is important to point out that although she stated that she’s “learned to respect them,” she still remained “uncomfortable” with their beliefs, and would prefer that they convert to Christianity.

Like other groups with whom one finds solidarity, there is a set of assumptions or beliefs that define group membership and contribute to a milieu of worldviews. Religious beliefs can be often the most sensitive and personal. Although global education should seek to “contribute to a sense of interconnectedness,” scholars have noted that, “we may be open-minded in regard to some issues and not others, often depending on the degree of personal investment in the issue.”²⁶ In other words, global education should seek to find commonalities instead of differences, yet still recognize that people may not

be able to hold multiple truths on some issues. Nonetheless, a tendency to hold fast to one's identity politics and find differences instead of commonalities seems to impede the initial acquisition of perspective consciousness.

Political and Ethnic Consciousness

While in Macedonia, the U.S. students struggled with their own political identity. For them, it was not so much an issue of ethnicity, as one of politics. Several U.S. students reported being uneasy with what being an American meant at an unpopular time for U.S. foreign policy and the Iraq war. They sought to articulate their specific political ideals and wished not be grouped as merely "Americans" in accordance with the decisions of their government. Two students were initially concerned with what their host parents would say about America politically. Both approached the topic cautiously when it came up during their home-stays. For Melanie, it ignited a "long political conversation about U.S. politics." Three of the U.S. participants were "relieved" and "surprised" that their host friends and family "knew so much about U.S. politics."

However, the students from Macedonia did not always find hosts who were as well-informed of Macedonia's political situation or who "didn't even know where Macedonia was on a map." In these situations, they were more reluctant to talk about the details of the recent violence in their country and the reasons behind the violence. A longer quotation, taken from the final reflection of an ethnic-Albanian student, Mini, describes the difficulty she had in explaining the conflict that happened in Macedonia to a high school class in the U.S.:

I saw that people were less informed and enthusiastic about Macedonia. I know that for them, not knowing one Slavic country such as Macedonia is not a serious issue. But at least they should have learned something, for the sake of

our discussion. Anyway, our job became even harder, when we realized that they have never even heard about Macedonia. We had to start from the geographical aspect to its historical background. The hardest thing for me was to tell about the ethnic conflict in Macedonia. To be honest I was embarrassed when I came to this discussion because I felt that we are still living in some centuries ago. In the place where everybody has the right to choose about his own future, I was ashamed to tell that in my place there are still people who think that speaking another language except the official language should be prohibited. The discussion became harder when it came to the conflict in 2001, because they couldn't imagine the situation.

Despite the fact that this young woman is the first generation of her family to attend college and rise above some of the past inequalities of being an Albanian, female, and Muslim, Mini still felt “embarrassed” that her country seemed to be less progressive, or “living centuries ago.” This embarrassment for her own country could happen because she attempted to see the situation from the U.S. high school students’ perspective, rather than her own. Moreover, it seems that the dissonance she experienced between many of her fellow Macedonian citizens, “who think that speaking another language except the official language should be prohibited,” and the students from this U.S. high school who similarly could not empathize with her, did not depress her. She said she felt energized to tell people why progress for ethnic-Albanians, women especially, is important. Achieving perspective consciousness seemed to be a desire for her, albeit somewhat pained.

Each U.S. participant at some point reported “feeling like a minority” in the exchange. These students encountered the often humbling scenario of facing one’s own lack of knowledge, or seeing themselves in a new light and subsequently returning home changed in some indefinable way. For instance, Eric, as he entered the airport in Skopje, Macedonia, was spoken to in Macedonian and “had no clue what they are saying.” Eric suddenly felt “uncomfortable and foreign.” Melanie reported similar discomfort while

shopping and not being able to communicate what she wanted in their language. In individual interviews, Eric and Leah connected this experience of minority languages to people speaking Spanish in the U.S. Both of them stated that they might be more apt to be sympathetic to minority language rights after knowing what it feels like to want to speak the language but not being able to do so.

Hand-in-hand with the humbling experiences *as* the minority themselves, the American students spent much time *with* minorities, ethnic-Albanian students and reported feeling both empathy for solidarity with their new friends. When Eric spoke with a young ethnic-Albanian man who was shot in his leg on the street by a “Macedonian waving a gun” during the violent outbreaks in 2001, he said that he felt empathy for the young man who would never again play soccer again for his city’s team. He further ruminated in an individual interview that perhaps he was “getting a skewed interpretation” of the relations between the two groups but nonetheless felt empathy for the ethnic-Albanians and the apparent injustices they have suffered. This is similar to Melanie’s realization in the tekke that she had never had to deal with violence on American soil. In conversations with their hosts at a bar, the U.S. students said that even though the U.S. is at war with Iraq, do they get a first-hand perspective of the effects of war only on television. Melanie reported that seeing the effects of violence first-hand made her even more in favor of finding alternatives to war.

There were several specific moments when the U.S. students reported that they experienced further solidarity with ethnic minorities. During a community-wide poetry competition, several of them noticed the strong bonds of community and parent involvement. Eric stated, “I didn’t understand a word of it but I just felt like they

welcomed us and brought us in there. One little girl's mom was sitting next to me. When she presented, the mom was all smiling.” During the poetry performance, Eric also wrote a poem and considered sharing it in the poetry reading but did not. Instead, he later shared the poem in an individual interview; the poem stated that he now “embraces them [the Tetovo community] like a family.” He then connected this to his home-stay, “I call her my mom [laughs], she wanted to wash my clothes and I ran into the issue of leaving my clothes there and my passport was in my pocket...But she made sure I got it back. They [his hosts] are very trusting, very sincere.” Eric later stated, “I feel compelled to be more sympathetic to others that are mistreated.” By finding similar cultural norms, many of the U.S. students gained some degree of trust, affinity, and solidarity with their hosts.

Months later, while doing his student teaching, Eric was teaching about slavery and the Underground Railroad and reported the following in an email to us: “I related that back to my Macedonian trip because of the ethnic differences there and the racial difference here and I feel like that had more of an impact on students learning than me just saying, ‘oh this never really happens nowadays’...making a direct correlation to now, that people still have differences made more of an impact on their (his students’) view of respecting others.” Even though members of his own family were persecuted during World War II, it was as a result of this direct experience that Eric reported being able to teach from multiple perspectives and specifically connect the American curriculum with global examples where issues of political oppression are still largely unresolved.

Even before the exchange, both the SEEU and U.S. students identified themselves with something larger and more complex than their national identity. However, this

experience complicated their identity by adding new lenses through which they view and may teach world issues.

Resource Consciousness

Although the U.S. students initially were steadfast in their values of comfort, convenience, and material supplies in educational settings and did not frame it as the Macedonians' positive necessity for reduced environmental and/or economic impact in schools and homes, each student individually reported on various aspects of *resource consciousness* in which they found solidarity with the host community and, however briefly, saw their own resource perspectives and habits anew.

The elementary and high schools that the U.S. students and project advisors visited in Macedonia were all in the city of Tetovo, an Albanian enclave of approximately 80,000 people in the northwest corner of Macedonia.²⁷ The schools visited were scheduled in a.m. and p.m. shifts to accommodate both Ethnic-Albanian language and Albanian language students, separately. The class sizes usually approximated forty students to one teacher. The school buildings were mostly erected during the reconstruction after WWII. During the visits to the public elementary and high schools, the U.S. students commented on the resources in the schools. They noted that many desks and chairs were broken, that the science lab equipment was "outdated," that it was "too bad" that books were shared by shifts of students, that students could not take the books home, and that it was "strange" not seeing computers in the classrooms.

It also came as a surprise to most of the U.S. students that many areas of the Macedonian schools were left unheated in the winter, and as a result students kept their coats on in the hallways to stay warm. Melanie compared the partially unheated schools

to her schooling experience: “My experience was so much different because I went to a very exclusive, private high school and it was such a beautiful facility and I know that if my high school, if it was ever as cold as that school, temperature-wise, my parents would have just...so furious.” Several U.S. students wondered aloud, in a group interview, how learning could occur effectively with such “barriers.”

In a similar way, in their home-stays, each of the U.S. students commented, in focus group and individual interviews, on the families’ preservation of electric and gas resources, as not all rooms in their homes were heated, unless they were currently in-use. And during one of the group meals in Macedonia, Melanie commented that her host family served her Coca-Cola, which she learned was a rare treat in their home, but she admitted not even drinking that at home because instead she drinks “diet.”

Melanie later stated, “things I think of as necessities, they ration or consider indulgences.” In a group conversation, U.S. students came to the conclusion that resource usage was not an institutional decision, as in the schools, but instead a way of life for people in Macedonia.

Yet Miah, the Pakistani international student studying special education at a U.S. university, saw this reality of resource preservation in schools a bit differently. As she envisioned possibly going back to her home country to teach someday, she reported that she was better able to relate to the schools in Macedonia and how she would adapt to teaching in a classroom, “where you don’t always have everything you want [resources, supplies, infrastructure] and education is not always a top priority of your government.” After seeing a Macedonian teacher instructing with a student-centered interactive approach with a bare classroom in an older school, Miah reported that she suddenly

realized that her philosophy of education could work in a place with fewer resources than the U.S., such as in her home country of Pakistan. In an individual interview, she said that this experience was something that “my field experiences in the U.S. could not have provided me.” In a later group conversation about this topic led by Miah, the other U.S. students seemed to have not thought of it as she had, but they nodded and agreed. Melanie said, “Yeah, it was interesting to see how they get by without all of the things we are used to seeing in classrooms.”

Leah, the devout Christian from Michigan, had a unique experience with resource consciousness during her stay in the dorm with an SEEU student. Leah was hanging out with “about 15 to 20 girls” one night and, “pretty much all of them wanted to go to grad[uate] school.” They explained to her that they can barely afford the university they currently attend but hope for “the chance” to attend graduate school. Leah reported in an individual interview that, “I guess I was pretty much put to shame because I don’t even necessarily want to go to grad school.” Leah saw from their vantage point the resources available to her are not available for these young women and reportedly was “shamed” about the way in which she took education and financial support for granted.

On the other half of the trip, the ethnic-Albanian students, while in the U.S., reacted to the discrepancies of resources between theirs and the U.S. schools. The resource availability was inspirational at times in the U.S., but that realization also manifested itself in disillusionment with their own country’s resources and an awareness of even more extreme lack of equality and rights in the world. Not only was there an extreme difference between their Macedonian schools and the nicest schools in the U.S.; they also reported that there was a large discrepancy *between* schools they saw in the U.S. As they

visited both older and newer school buildings with differing funding, the students reported that they did not realize the schools would actually be so different than the ones in their home country, nor would there be “such inequality between U.S. public schools.” In a group interview, three of the five students agreed that this was “unfair” and preferred the Macedonian school systems, which have more homogeneous funding, albeit modest, for all public schools.

While visiting a well-funded U.S. elementary school, the ethnic-Albanian students were inspired by the use of real music instruments in an elementary school and not just “black and white paper pianos” from which they had learned in school. When reflecting on the school visits in a focus group interview, they all commented on the wealth of children’s books and resources in elementary libraries and classrooms.

During and after visiting schools, the students seemed to be full of emotional highs and lows. Yet perhaps most symbolically profound for the ethnic-Albanian students was the variety of national flags which hung at the entrance of one “international” elementary school. They all paused and commented, and mentioned the “impossibility” of such in their own country and again later in focus-group interviews. After that, one student, Haji, reported that he began to cry at the sight of children of different colors and nationalities performing a play together, again something that is not yet possible in Macedonia’s segregated shift schools. This emotion, a mixture of happiness and melancholy, captures the bittersweet reaction to their school visits in the U.S. While most of them found the discrepancy of resources between several of the U.S. public schools as “unfair,” they reported being hopeful for the future and the possibilities of a more funded and integrated education for all in ethnic groups in Macedonia.

Conclusions and Implications

The data generated by this study reveal several factors that may aid in the development of perspective consciousness. First, experience alone does not make someone a global thinker. Students must be informed of the substantive knowledge of a place, its history, its peoples, politics, and geography. The data demonstrate that when the “other” knew relevant information about where the student was coming from, moments of perspective consciousness generally occurred. Yet when they did not know much, students tended to draw more from inside their own perspective. Once the students at the U.S. high school “didn’t even know where Macedonia was on a map,” Mini identified more strongly as an ethnic-Albanian, and less like the U.S. high school students and interestingly, less like Macedonians too. It is worth considering here whether encounters with ill-informed or closed-minded people have adverse or deleterious effects on expanding perspective consciousness. More certainly, these data confirm that continuing courses, experiences, and readings that support students’ substantive knowledge of a place is imperative in fostering perspective consciousness.

Still, perspective-taking does not happen automatically by simply studying and then viewing another’s system. Indeed, as Case indicated, a certain mindset must also be present.²⁸ Moments of perspective consciousness happen while reflecting, inquiring, or talking with others about the experience, all the while recognizing the validity of the other’s beliefs and practices. Thus the preparations of substantive knowledge should not occur without opportunities for sustained reflection within the experience. These findings re-emphasize R. Case’s distinction that perspective consciousness is indeed “of” the

perceptual dimension. But although perspective consciousness lies in Case's perceptual dimension, it must not be separated from the substantive dimension, knowledge of the world: perspective consciousness is indeed of the perceptual but relies on the substantive as well. Fostering a global perspective should be a curricular objective alongside experiential components in which students interact and reflect on their perspective.

In addition to the substantive needing the experience, it is to be noted that when students sought similarity or 'same-ness,' it was easier for them to imagine the other's perspective as valid. When asked what aided these feelings of solidarity with their hosts, students reported on their similar cultural markers or norms, such as: parent involvement in school, mothers taking care of one's things, giving back something to somebody if it is theirs, giving food, sharing of their time, and having a similar sense of humor. For example, as Miah described the values in her Sunni and the Baba's Bektashi sect of Muslim, she noted their similarity and how they just emphasize different parts of the whole Muslim faith. Eric told the group that he called the woman that hosted him "mom" and followed his statement by telling us that when she did his laundry, she was honest and gave him back his passport. As Eric's saw her like his own mother in this scenario, students often sought similarity to explain or even rationalize their acceptance of a new perspective. Although this tendency seemed to aid in perspective consciousness, it may also be emblematic of an oversimplification of the host culture.

Finding solidarity with one group of people does not automatically mean an expansion in perspectives. It can also mean a shift or a honing of one's past perspective, letting go of a previously held view. Indeed, Leah may never again see her capability to attend graduate school the same, and Haji may be now be less accepting of the separate

shift (Albanian-speaking/Macedonian-speaking) school system since seeing a multilingual international school. As Case suggests, “enhanced open-mindedness and empathy increase the prospect that students will reconsider judgments about their own cultures and nation,” and these data confirm that they may think differently about themselves and their own nation as result of the experience.²⁹

Having sustained and in-depth experiences with minorities may provide U.S. students in particular, with an opportunity to re-examine their own privilege. From the distance of war, treatment of minorities, and the availability of resources, the U.S. students reflected on their relative privilege. Although the experiences initially left them ridden with guilt, shock, or surprise, they later reported that they were able to be better hosts of their guests when they arrived for the U.S. side of the trip, and teach minority perspectives in current issues, or in less than affluent contexts. This article thus offers further data to Merryfield’s claim that a global perspective requires a critical kind of perspective consciousness: *understanding a marginalized point of view*.³⁰

Still, not all issues are as open as others to rethinking. It is important to note how each student brings in his or her own lens with a different degree of malleability and openness to mutual understanding, depending on their degree of personal investment in an issue. Issues addressing ethnic identity, war, being right and wrong ethically or religiously, proved to be the most difficult to discuss openly. For instance, although Leah was ready to re-imagine her financial privilege of being able to attend graduate school, she was less willing to accept others’ perspective on religion, something that was closest to her habits and identity. When there was evidence that the “other” is open-minded, the grounds for perspective-taking was fostered. Conversely, when students believed that

others would “put up walls,” they often were putting up their own walls. This was exemplified not only in Leah’s response to the tekke, but also the standoff on religious issues within the first five days of the Macedonian side of the trip. Thus the data reveals differences in individual capacity to conduct a thoughtful and purposeful inquiry, depending on the sensitivity of the issue.

Experiences that foster perspective consciousness may enable teachers to envision new possibilities and not just merely following tradition for tradition’s sake. More specifically, students often report that they do things in a host classroom because “that is way it has been done by the lead teacher.” Then, once they are hired, they often report teaching and making curricular decisions in a way that will fit with the teachers around them. Here, the experience of seeing others’ resources and what they do with them enabled the project’s students to visualize their own system of education in new ways, with creative solutions and ideas. These visions break the mold of the usual. Certainly for teachers, freedom involves seeing their reality with new eyes, and creating moments of possibility.³¹ Dewey similarly holds that we are not free because of what “we statically are, but in so far as we are becoming different from what we have been.”³² Purposeful and engaging global exchange projects, in which teachers examine another’s educational system, may be the springboard for new imaginative avenues and freedoms for teachers.

It is significant to note that the design of this global exchange that engages students to act as both guests and hosts and to reflect on those two experiences extended the relatively short stay in a foreign country and made it more meaningful. Data especially from final written reflections show how students relied on *both* components to account for their learning. Thus as the field of teacher-education promotes global

experiences for their teacher education candidates, the prospect of an exchange in which students have a sustained experience with a group of peers, as both guests and hosts, should be considered, rather than just a one-shot experience of similar length.

All in all, a cross-cultural exchange, even for a short period of time, can enhance possibilities for global citizenship by challenging the malleability of our perspectives. Despite variations on particular topics, each student found solidarity with their hosts and, perhaps only briefly, internalized their outlook on the world in some way. In the end, pre-service educators who live, communicate, and participate in international settings may achieve a unique blend of learnings on perspective consciousness. But the process is far more complex than teacher educators may initially envision, and sensitive issues may require more than a twenty-day experience, may never change, or may change in ways this project's research methods could not capture. If the future indeed depends on the ability of citizens to work with diverse people and to, "Be a global citizen!" then it is essential that we engage students in inquiries about diverse places and have chances for personal engagement with them.

Finally, educators, we should consider a particular underlying component of this project: the ability for American students to interact and understand the perspectives of people of the Muslim faith. If the future well-being of the world depended upon two groups of people seeing eye-to-eye, the time may be now and it may well be between these two groups.

NOTES

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² Merry M. Merryfield and Binaya Subedi, "Decolonizing the Mind for World-Centered Global Education." in E. Wayne Ross, ed., *Contemporary Perspectives on the Social Studies Curriculum*, 2nd. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).

³ Hanvey, "An Attainable Global Perspective."

⁴ R. Case, "Key Elements of a Global Perspective" *Social Education* 57 (1993): 318-25; J.R. Coombs, *Towards a Defensible Conception of a Global Perspective: Explorations in Development/ Global Education*. (Vancouver: Vancouver Research and Development in Global Studies University of British Columbia/Simon Fraser University, 1988); Merryfield, J. Jarchow and S. Pickert, eds., *Preparing Teachers to Teach Global Perspectives*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 1997); Merryfield and Subedi, "Decolonizing the Mind for World-Centered Global Education"; Merryfield, "Moving the Center of Global Education: From Imperial World Views that Divide the World to Double Consciousness, Contrapuntal Pedagogy, Hybridity, and Cross-Cultural Competence." in William B. Stanley, ed., *Critical Issues in Social Studies Research for the 21st Century* (Greenwich, CT: Information Age, 2001): 179-208; Merryfield and A. Wilson, "Social Studies and the World: Teaching Global Perspectives," Presented at the annual conference of The National Council for the Social Studies, Washington D.C, 2005.

⁵ National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, *Standard IV: Diversity and Equity*. Retrieved on 10/10/06 from http://www.ncate.org/documents/pds/stand_4_dev_guide.pdf; National Council for the Social Studies. *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. (Washington, DC: NCSS Publications, 1994).

⁶ Merryfield, "Why Aren't Teachers Being Prepared to Teach for Diversity, Equity, and Global Understanding?" *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16 (2000): 429-43; K.T. Carano and M.T. Berson, "Geographic Literacy and Cultural Awareness through Technology." *The Social Studies* 98(2) (2007): 65-71.

⁷ Merryfield, "Moving the Center of Global Education"; Carano & Berson, "Geographic Literacy and Cultural Awareness through Technology."

⁸ Case, "Key Elements of a Global Perspective."

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Hanvey, "An Attainable Global Perspective." 162.

¹¹ Case, "Key Elements of a Global Perspective."; Merryfield, "Moving the Center of Global Education"

¹² Merryfield, "Why Aren't Teachers Being Prepared to Teach for Diversity, Equity, and Global Understanding?"; K.M. Zeichner, C. Grant, C. Gay, M. Gillette, L. Valli, and A.M. Villegas. "A Research Informed Vision of Good Practice in Multicultural Teacher Education: Design Principles." *Theory Into Practice* 37 (1998): 163-71.

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²¹ Hanvey, "An Attainable Global Perspective."

²² Mead, "Social Consciousness and the Consciousness of Meaning."; D. Britzman, "Is There a Problem with Knowing Thyself? Towards a Post-Structuralist View of Teacher Identity," in T. Shanahan, *Teachers Thinking, Teachers Knowing: Reflections on Literacy and Language Education*. (Urbana, IL: NCRE, 1994), 53-75; C. McCarthy, *The Use of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

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²⁶ W.M. Kneip, *A Critical Review of the Short History of Global Education: Preparing for New Opportunities*. (New York: Global Perspectives in Education, 1988), 438-39; Case, "Key Elements of a Global Perspective." 321.

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²⁸ Case, "Key Elements of a Global Perspective."

²⁹ Case, "Key Elements of a Global Perspective." 324.

³⁰ Merryfield & Subedi, "Decolonizing the Mind for World-Centered Global Education."

³¹ Greene, *Dialectic of Freedom*.

³² J. Dewey, "How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process," 280.