

Andrews University

School of Education

MY WORLDVIEW: REFLECTION PAPER

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of this class I have been reflecting in one question: How do my worldview and my cultural background have influenced the way I approach my leadership? In this paper I will discuss different approaches to define and deal with different worldviews, and at end, I will attempt to answer this question. However, initially, to understand the complexity of this question, I have to understand separately few worldviews such as development, culture, education and its theories, values, beliefs, knowledge, the philosophies related to education, schooling and learning. In the following report, I will review some of the literature surrounding different views in defining worldview and I will position myself in many discussions that will reflect my worldview. Finally, in “My Worldview As Leader” I will combine the discussed topics seeking to reshape, improve and/or reaffirm my own worldview and describe how this course has influenced the way I approach my worldview.

My understanding of worldview

I truly believe that the countries where I have had the opportunity to live have influenced the way I approach and express my worldview. I have lived in three different cultures (Brazilian, American and Canadian). Brazil is the country where I was born and

lived until my age of 35. In Brazil I pursued my first dreams in education and I acquired an important part of my professional experiences. I moved to United States (US) in 2002 and lived there for ten years, and then I moved to Canada. In US I could live, work and study and as a result I could assimilate a lot the “American way” of life which includes liberty, life, and happiness. In the central of the American lifestyle is the “American Dream” that dictates that, with hard work, everything is possible. I truly believe and accept this “American Dream” for my life. Since June 2012 I and my family have been living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Living in Canada, I have to be open to learn and acquire the knowledge on the Canadian culture, and to experience the “Canadian way” of life.

Having the opportunity to live in different cities, and study and work in all these countries I can say that I could assimilate their cultures along the years. Indeed, I have perceived that these cultures have been influencing my worldview along the years. These, how I use to say “cultural baths,” have influenced and shaped my worldview in ways that make me more conscious about the foundation and roots of my own worldview.

Many times I have experienced cultural conflicts; however, they have promoted new views about how to approach the realities of my personal, educational, and professional lives. Relating to this point, Wilkens and Sanford (2009) declare that “worldviews are not primarily systems of interlinked ideas and beliefs, but they are experienced, absorbed and expressed in the midst of life” (p.15).

Furthermore, it is very important for me to recognize that I am not right all the time about my worldviews because sometimes “what we really believe is not always

congruent with what we say we believe or think we want to believe” claim (Wilkins & Sanford, 2009, p. 21). This is true because we receive innumerable influences based on the environment we live into or have contact with. In other times “our actions and ideas are shaped by the reactions and ideas of those closest to us” (Wilkins & Sanford, 2009, p. 174). Anyways, I see for sure that the cultures have influenced and shaped my worldview.

In order to enhance my understanding of worldview, I will point out different ways that motivate a better knowledge on it. According to my knowledge, an important step that helps me to understand the worldview as a whole starts with worldview development. It is into this step, worldview development, that we as a child grow and experience the world through the way we see relationships, discriminate, categorize, form opinion and generalize about everything that our senses can reveal. Wilkins and Sanford (2009) help us to understand this point where they say that as soon as we come to this world, we come to compete and experience it in a variety of ways including realities such as purpose, goodness and truth, and “we experience them in a multitude of ways” (p.18).

It is important to discern that usually worldviews come to us in pieces and not as a formed system that contains the full idea, and that we encounter them through many ways such as heritage, family influence, educational system, religion, peer groups, media channels and other variety of sources (Wilkins & Sanford, 2009). As a person receiving all these influences, we start to build our own view about the worldview through the process of exchanging our experiences, memories that comprehend our ideas in the abstract form, to fully understanding. Then, we work to fit the concepts which we have been

influenced for into patterns, and start to structure our conceptual patterns into conceptualized frameworks. Though the acquisition of new concepts commonly decrease as we get older, our already formed conceptual frameworks can still be altered by the point that new experiences will add new ways to see the old perceptions. Reaching this point, independently of how old we are, we start seeking to know and understand who we really are.

Our worldview includes everything and all events in the world as we relate to them, and encompasses past, present, and future, and “they are transmitted through a variety of forms such as music, advertising, political speeches, and unsolicited advice from friends or family” (Wilkins & Sanford, 2009, p. 18). It is something that we continually will spend the rest of our life refining, testing and refining again based on learning, experience, knowledge, conflict and feedback we can get as a form to measure it.

We build our fundamentals and handover it to the world through words, and then, these words express our own worldviews. Wilkins and Sanford (2009) argue that “words that describe some of the most fundamental facts about us are not simple brute facts. They have meaning for us, and they mean something, often something very different, to others around us” (p.139). In this way, our wide-ranging idea of our entire world, that is, our worldview, is developed.

Different views on worldview

The term *worldview* comes from the German *Weltanschauung*, meaning a view or perspective on the world or the universe “used to describe one’s total outlook on life, society and its institutions” (Wolman, 1973, p. 406). In a more philosophical view, worldview can be defined as collection of conventions and beliefs that can describe reality (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). Anderson (2014) describes worldview as an “all-encompassing perspective on everything that exists and matter to us” (p.12). He asserts that worldview represents most fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the world you live in.

Worldview can be described in different ways as assumptions about a variety of topics that can include: 1. the meaning and nature of life, 2. the human nature, and 3. the composition of the universe itself, only to name a few. Anderson explains worldview in a similar way that Overton (1991) did earlier where the last defined as “a set of interrelated assumptions about the nature of the world is called a worldview” (p.269). Overton (1991) and Anderson (2014) talk about assumptions and they concur that worldviews are assumptions that a person make when facing some circumstance, positioning or discussion about something.

In the largest sense, a worldview is the interpretive lens one uses to understand reality and one’s existence within it (Miller & West, 1993). In other words, according to the situation, I submit that approach to my understanding and then I deliver my way of thinking about the issue or topic in discussion. Anderson (2014) defends that worldviews play a central and defining role in our lives. They shape what we believe and what we are

willing to believe, how we interpret our experiences, how we behave in response to those experiences, and how we relate to others (p.13). In a brief, worldviews dictate the way I respond and react to the environment I am into.

Sire (2004) defines worldview as a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the hearts, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being. (p.122)

If compared to Anderson (2014), Miller and West (1993) and Overton (1991), Sire (2004) goes a bit further and clarifies his definition saying that we have a tendency to expel out through stories what is inside of our hearts and these stories reveals our positioning or the way we see and understand the world we live into.

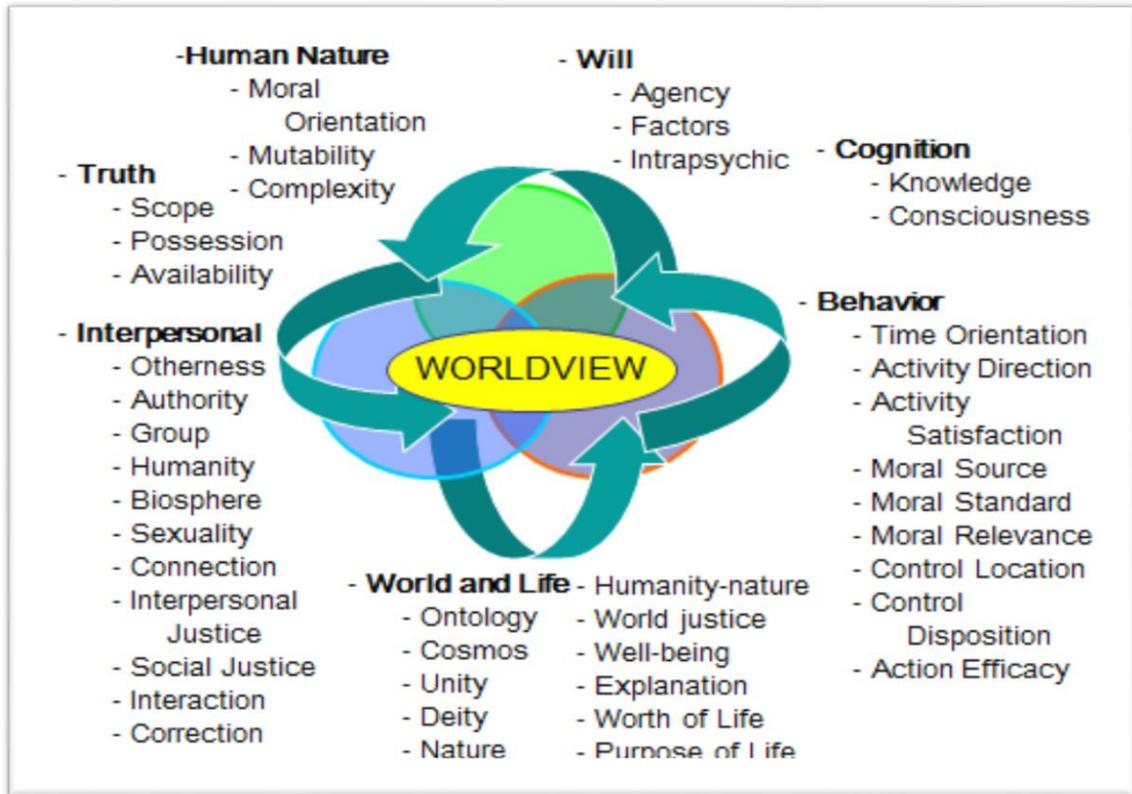
For example, as Seventh-Day Adventist believer I think that when we go to church in our Sabbath school lessons, the discussions we enter is shaped by a combination of many factors such as how we understand the context presented by the Bible, the facilitator's interpretation, how we face that situation consciously or subconsciously in our lives, and how to approach correctly to the questions the Sabbath lessons are presenting. Sometimes the discussions get hot because many different worldviews are discussed and the interpretations can vary.

An understandable approach is to undertake through assessment in terms of worldview themes (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). A worldview theme typically links beliefs with

behaviors adding to it, orientations and values. In analyzing our own worldview; interpreting the themes is a step that helps to discover who we are, how we understand, how we relate to people, and how we fit into the world. Equally the process of auto-examination of the consistency of ourselves that can include our beliefs, values, and behavior, is one process to be always encouraged. Our worldview fundamentally affects and influence what we perceive, feel, think, and do. Many people have a tendency to repeat certain thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and feelings in a similar way.

Furthermore, the most objectivity we can achieve is to be critically aware of our worldview and how it affects our interpretations of “the facts” in our own worldview as well as in other’s worldviews. In a process of naming “the facts” and looking at the formal description and stereotype; these facts are called “worldview themes”. In a sense, these “worldview themes” are used to depict an individual’s own worldview.

Example of worldview themes: A Collated Model of Worldview by Koltko-Rivera (2004), cited in Chamberlain (n.d.) - (graphic version)



Source: Koltko-Rivera, M. (2004).

According to this model, in the process of building one's worldview, there are a combination of seven main themes called *groups*. These *groups* are: 1. human nature, 2. truth, 3. interpersonal, 4. world and life, 5. behavior, 6. cognition, and 7. will. Every single group is subdivided in different sub-themes called "dimensions."

As I have acquired a multicultural background experiences living in three different countries and assimilating their cultures; I have directly or indirectly experienced the Collated Model of Worldviews in my life. For example, the *cognition* group includes dimensions regarding beliefs about thought and mind (Koltko-Rivera, 2004, p. 32). There are two dimensions in this cognition group: knowledge and

consciousness. According to Koltko-Rivera (2004) the knowledge dimension is related to epistemological beliefs on trusty knowledge, and the consciousness refers to “beliefs about whether the highest state of human consciousness occurs within the context of ego cognition or transcends the ego in what are described as peak” (p.32). Thus, connecting this model to my worldview tying the cognition group to it; I see the knowledge and consciousness as two huge dimensions that make part of my own worldview along the years in my life. Knowledge can be expressed as how I recognize the things I know. It can come from a variety of forms such as school and life education, personal and professional experiences, broadcast, internet, only to name a few.

Looking at *the truth group*. The dimensions inserted in this group describe the “stance that people take toward what they hold as “the Truth,” that is, an overarching body of doctrine (e.g., a school of philosophy or a body of religious teaching)” (Koltko-Rivera, 2004, p. 34). Three are the dimensions that explain this group: 1. scope, 2. possession, and 3. availability. The authors explain the three dimensions in the following:

the scope dimension reflects beliefs about the degree to which “the Truth” is valid across situations . The possession dimension concerns the degree to which the person’s reference group is in possession of an accurate account of the universe, and the availability dimension concerns the degree to which a valid approach to life and knowledge of the world is the exclusive possession of the person’s reference group. (pp. 34-35)

Thus, connecting the *truth group* into my own worldview using the scope dimension, I can express the universal and relative truths such as 1. Universal: God is God in everywhere, and 2. Relative: the truth can be relative depending on the situation (relativism).

In a general format, my behavior is a mix of good things that happened in the past with good things in my present. In terms of human nature group, I believe that we are humans beings with a level of complexity, that are mutable towards a moral orientation to do things for good or bad. My interpersonal group says that I have to be tolerable; I can exercise dependent, independent and interdependent relationship with people, and I look for justice. My world and life side states that I pleasure harmony, a just world justice, and my purpose of life follows the “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need” with a top need balanced among pleasure, belonging, achievement and self-actualization.

Sire’s 7 questions: My foundation

My religious worldview is based on Christian Theism. Sire (2009) claims that “a worldview involves the mind, but it first of all a commitment, a matter of the soul. It is a spiritual orientation more than it is a matter of mind alone” (p.20). As a foundation, our worldview generally lies so deeply embedded in our subconscious that unless we have reflected long and hard, we are unaware of what it is (Sire, 2009, p. 21). So, having a Christian Theism I believe that God is the foundation of everything I can ever imagine not only for me and my life, but as the answer for the universe.

I accept the Bible and the spirit of prophecy based in the Bible. I believe in God and I truly accept that as human beings we are not a genetic accident in this cosmic world, but we have a sense of worth and dignity that, according to the Bible, has an start in Genesis with the God’s creation on everything. I accept Jesus Christ as a son of God

that become flesh and came to this world to rescue me. I accept the Holy Spirit, as part of the Trinity (God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit). I also believe in the human redemption through Jesus Christ and in the second coming of Jesus that will give us eternal life. Jesus is our Savior. Jesus is the way that can give salvation to everyone who believes in Him.

Discussing about “the Beginning” of everything that constitutes the foundation of our worldview, Sire (2009) presents seven questions that clarifies and helps me to expand my positioning about God.

1. What is prime reality – the really real?

God is prime reality for me. I believe that God is real, and I speak to Him always and in a variety of ways. God is finite, personal, transcendent, omniscient, sovereign, and good (Sire, 2009, pp. 28-31). I also believe that God is the principle of love. Among the innumerable Bible verses that talks about the God’s love, I resonate with John 15:13 says that “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Palmer, 1994).

- 2.

3. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?

I believe that my worldview starts on the Bible, on the book of Genesis where it says that God created everything. God spoke and everything turned orderly into

existence. As cited in Sire (2009), Isaiah wrote “I am the Lord, and there is no other” declares about God (Isaiah 45:18).

4. What is a human being?

Human being is a highly complex machine that even with all researches about the human body; they know only a small parcel of it. We are God’s image, created by God and, even with freedom, God respect us and give us always the best option. The people are made in the image of God means “We are like God” that puts the emphasis where it belongs - on the primacy God (Sire, 2009, p. 33).

5. What happens to a person at death?

A person stops breathing (simple). After death two things will happen to everyone. On page 41 Sire says: “At death people are transformed” in two ways: 1. to live with God eternally (saints); or to perish when everything in this world has gotten to an end. I really hope to be transformed by God’s grace and mercy and receive the victory to live with God forever.

6. Why is it possible to know anything at all?

I believe, in this earth, we will never know anything at all. It is impossible. Only God can. However, as human beings we were made in the image of an omniscient God. We can think, talk, see, hear, smell, taste, etc... and our “anything” is based in our personal and professional needs. Gen 1:27 (Palmer, 1994) cited in (Sire, 2009) states that “the foundation of human knowledge is the character of God as Creator. We are made in His image.” So only God knows everything.

7. How do we know what is right and wrong?

I would say that the discernment about what is right or wrong starts with our worldview development as a child which also includes the environment we live into. It continues as we grow in age where we can distinguish them through our knowledge, learning, experiences and ethics about what is right or wrong. Everything starts with the fear of the Lord. Psalms 111:10 says that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Holy Bible). So I have to believe in God, fear Him and He will give the discernment that I need to choose between things that are right and wrong.

8. What is the meaning of human history?

Philosophically, I think is too complex to even try to understand the meaning of human history. Unfortunately, the sin started when Adam and Eve ate the fruit. Fortunately, to solve the issue God revealed His plan of salvation for all humankind. Through this process and by God's mercy, there was a redemption plan where Jesus Christ was born, raised and died on this earth. I truly believe and seek for the second coming of Jesus where all the mysteries will be revealed.

Worldview: A cultural fact

Wilkins and Sanford (2009) declares that “the most powerful influences come from worldviews that emerge from culture” (p.12). They state that our worldview will have a profound influence on how we vision ourselves, our universe, and our actions, because we do not just think our way into worldviews, “we experience them” (Wilkins & Sanford, 2009, p. 15).

In analyzing the cultural context, Merriam-Webster defines culture through many ways. For example:

1. the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations;
2. the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group;
3. the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time; and
4. the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization (a corporate culture focused on the bottom line).

With all the above, so what the extent does culture shape worldview? Analyzing culture, Thom Wolf declares that culture certainly makes the difference (Wolf, 2010). Wilkens and Sanford (2009) declare that “we live in a world with a great deal of diversity...the broad array of languages, religions, races, nationalities and other cultural factors reminds us of the global range of diversity” (p.139-140).

Values are among the most stable and enduring characteristics of individuals. They are foundation upon which attitudes and personal preferences and formed (Whetten & Cameron, 2011, p. 65). Values are the basis for critical decisions, life directions, and personal senses. They help define our meaning, morality and our idea of what is good. Each of us is regularly being exposed to an overwhelming amount of information where only part of them receive attention and can be acted upon a time. Whetten and Cameron (2011) declare that “at least some of our values are affected significantly by the country and culture in which we are raised” (p.66). By this meaning I understand that we are build according to the environment we live.

Intrinsic to the cultural fact that surround us, we built our confessionnal and convictional beliefs through the ways we work, experience and enjoy life. Confessionnal are “ ideas that remain exclusively on the intellectual level” (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 22) acting on the conscious level. Convictional beliefs are reflected in our actions which many of them are on the subconscious level (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009). As the authors comment “it is important to integrate what we say we believe and what we actually do. This is not possible unless we live reflectively, carefully examining both our ideas and actions to see if they are in sync” (pp. 22-23). Many of our convictional beliefs work on

the subconscious level. We may not be conscious of them, but they are our true convictions (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009).

I believe our real worldview is found when the confessional and convictional beliefs overlaps. We deal with a combination of both of them in our daily lives. The extent one is more present than the other, it depends on the situation and environment we live into. I see a problem when the confessional is not aligned with the convictional or vice versa. We know people that through their words and actions pretend to do or be someone or something they are not. It seems that their ideas and actions are totally in disagreement. It is not hard to identify them. It is such as a “fake” and non-Christian life.

Personally, I am very rational, demand and reflective with myself. I really value the phrase “say, do and act like you mean it”. I am not afraid to take risks and make mistakes, because I learn through them. If there is something I need to do is to ask God more wisdom and humility to be able to identify my weakness and correct them, at the same time develop my strengths.

I really value a life with principles, truths, character and personality in accordance with God’s desire to me and my family lives. Careful worldview examination requires that we constantly hold up our convictions against the mirror of our actions to see where our confessional beliefs are incongruous with our convictional beliefs (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009, p. 22). By these actions, the truly culture is evoked.

I truly believe that my worldview has been influenced and shaped by the cultures where I have had the opportunity to embrace. I have lived in three different cultures (Brazilian, American and Canadian). I perceive that these cultures have influenced my

worldview along the years in the way that makes me more conscious about the foundation of my own worldview as well as they have promoted new views about how to approach the realities of my personal, educational, and professional lives.

I was born in Brazil. I can say that I am Brazilian with a Brazilian blood and that I have the desire to return to Brazil in the future. Brazil is where I left my parents and friends. If you want to know good people, you need to know Brazil. Brazil is my reference as language, culture, soccer, good music (samba, bossa-nova), and good food only to name a few. I use to say: once Brazilian, always Brazilian.

On the other hand, I also lived in US for 10 years where I had the opportunity to assimilate the American culture and life style. US is the country where I got married and where my daughter was born. It is also the country where I build a large piece of my life including personal and professional experiences. For many reasons I moved to Canada where I have been living for the last two and a half years. Now, Canada is “my” country. Even if I do not like so much, Canada is the country I have chosen to live with my family.

Canada is also called the country of opportunities and I am getting there. Once in Canada, I have to follow the Canadian life style, culture, language, politics, general rules and laws, immigration laws which differ totally from Brazil and even from US. Canada is shaping me now.

In many ways I can see that the cultures have shaped my worldview. Relating to this point, Wilkens and Sanford (2009) declares that “worldviews are not primarily

systems of interlinked ideas and beliefs, but they are experienced, absorbed and expressed in the midst of life” (p.15).

As leader in the position to exert leadership, if I understand the complexity of culture, working by worldview and values I am inserted, I can better understand my own behavior and values; however, I also live in a world that also includes other people. Moreover, dealing with the other’s behavior as well as lifestyle that are different from my own, is very important and gives me the opportunity to understand myself and the society I am inserted into. Certainly, learning and understanding their behavior will be based in understanding their worldviews. In doing so, I may find challenges my own values and beliefs.

Similarly, if others can understand my own worldview, they also can better understand the values and behavior I present, knowing that when one makes a value judgment, one makes a statement about the way the world “ought to” be, and of course people do this differently depending on their worldviews (Worldviews-An introduction, n.d.).

There is considerable evidence that an individual’s effectiveness as a leader is closely related to his or her ability to recognize, appreciate, and ultimately utilize key, fundamental differences among others (Whetten & Cameron, 2011, p. 60). Through this point, it is important to develop the ability to identify important variances among others with whom you network; and this is an essential component of your self-awareness. I would say that, in this context, the leader’s role would be a complete understanding of

culture, applying the worldview, values and principles in a right way moving forward the vision. Doing so, I can exert a better leadership.

Hidden worldviews into my worldview

Wilkins and Sanford (2009) claim that “the most powerful influence come from worldviews that emerge from culture. They are all around us, but are so deeply embedded in culture that we don’t see them” (p.12). This is so true because living in different cultures made me familiarized with its country culture that sometimes I forget to pay attention to some details. Living in three different cultures (Brazil, US and Canada), directly or indirectly they have shaped my worldview. Brazil is a country in development; however, by the time I left Brazil to live in US, Brazil was in a deeper financial, economic and political crisis that affected every single one. I had lost my job, my business, my money, but I had not lost the hope to start again from the scratch. So my decision to move to another country was founded in the desire to build a better future acquiring experiences not only living in a developed country, but for the opportunities I could get studying, working and building a new life in US.

In US I can say that I went from the bottom up to the top in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow (1943), a Psychologist, suggests that motivational behavior is related to human needs. This behavior is adjusted as per the nature of needs that must be satisfied. According to Maslow, people are motivated by five basic types of needs. These include the need to survive physiologically, the need for security, the need for affiliation

with other people (belongingness), the need for self-esteem, and the need for self-actualization.

Together with this hierarchy, the US life style open your worldview in many others worldviews. I felt the influences in regarding some hidden worldviews such as individualism and consumerism. Individualism , according to Wilkens and Sanford (2009, pp. 27-28) declare that “my unique interest and goals should be pursued, as much as possible, by whatever means deemed proper... but is a type of story about who we should be.” In my opinion, the US system preaches an individualism in all spheres. US opens the world in front of you and say that everything is possible, it only depends on you. With this cultural US fact in my life I pursued my dream to study and build my future with a good work and receiving a good salary until 2008 US crisis. After that, my life got another route.

The consumerism is other hidden worldview that is a piece of the US life style and that made part of my life while in US. Consumerism, according to Wilkens and Sanford (2009, p. 45) “absolutizes consumption by believing that we can find fulfillment by accumulating wealth and everything that comes with it.” While living in US I could “taste” this system by having the opportunity to buy a house, buy new and pre-owned cars, make money, and live well with my family.

Living in Canada, I am back to the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. I am studying, working part-time and rebuilding my life.

My worldview through many narratives

Discovering my reflection process

I never used to be reflective at the point to express many sides of my worldviews at once as I am doing during the Leadership program at Andrews University, and more precisely through this LEAD 636 course. This process of reflection is challenging for few reasons: 1. it seems I am in constant affirmation, evaluation and culturally contrasting my paradigms; 2. the way I see my class mates' worldviews and their ways of thinking; and 3. the authors' proposals on the books through the subjects and topics.

Working through these reflections in my daily life, I have learned that my best reflection time happens when I find good lectures through the books that makes a connection between how the book describes the topics and myself in relationship to it/them. It has been a good practice to have this opportunity to express myself in such a variety of expressive thoughts.

My frequent reflections have taken me to a new journey because it requires to think more closely to who, in reality, I am. Through these reflections, I have to express and explain myself in details at the point to reveal situation that are aching me. These aches are happening in my life and have helped me to know that something is going in discordant with my worldviews. In other words, my worldviews have been challenged and shaped because of these three aches.

My first ache relates to the fact I have been living far away from my family for years. As an immigrant pursuing dreams and reaching goals, I have been living out of my home country for the last 13 years. These 13 years are shared in 10 years lived in US and almost 3 years in Canada. It was my choice to move, and still is my choice to live, work, study and raise my family here in North America, not only by the fact that to live in developed countries is a privilege, but by the many opportunities that God has been blessing us. I try to enjoy these opportunities as much as possible and learn from them when the things go right or wrong. There is always a possibility to return to Brazil when my goals are reached.

In moving to North America, I established my goals in four directions: 1. Seek knowledge through education, and this is the reason I am taking this Ph.D. program at Andrews University, and also taking an Internationally Educated Professional (IEP) Bridging Program at York University; 2. To start and raise a family; 3. To live and assimilate new cultures that can turn into a deep multi-cultural experiences; and 4. To learn new languages and work as a way to improve my personal and professional backgrounds. However, there is always a sad story behind the “scenes,” and it concentrated in the fact that I miss my parents, brothers, sister and some friends a lot.

In “My Values and Beliefs That Shape My Worldview” section I have identified my family as really important to me and the fact that I am living far away of them for these 13 years is very hard to me. I always had a very good relationship with my family, and these feelings that I have living too distant from them, ache and hurt me every single day. For sure, this situation challenge my worldview.

My second ache is explained in the following: 11 years ago I had the opportunity to start a family in US. So in 2004 I married Daniele, a Brazilian girl coming from the North Region of Brazil. I did not know each other in Brazil; we met in our SDA church in US. From this relationship came my daughter, Hillary that is 10 years old. Thanks to God because I have a beautiful, intelligent, outgoing, Christian and smart daughter. I also have a 12 years old step-son, Richard. He is very intelligent, smart, a bit shy, and a very good soccer player. Both are very talented, Christian, educated, health, play many musical instruments and smart kids that is according to my belief to have a family, under my responsibility to give them the best I can do.

What aches me in this process to raise and keep a family together is that my wife has depression and also brings some traits of bipolar disorder. This emotional instability drives me crazy, affects and influences the whole environment in the family. Unfortunately, she had both a terrible infancy and young life during the period she lived with her parents. Her father was very abusive through his words and attitudes. As a result, she brings nightmares and traumas from her early life up to these days. In the same of “depression bag” comes insomnia, shifting moods, conflicts, and instable relationships. She only accepted to see a doctor and take some medicine on 2010. If, for one side, the medicines helped her in giving more stability in her moods and depression chemical levels; on the other side, after six months she gained a lot of weight. Consequently, she decided to stop the medicines and deal with the crisis by “herself.”

The real problem is that this situation affects the emotional levels into the family. The last time she saw the medical doctor was on November 2014. That time he gave her

three options: 1. To start taking medicines again-what she promptly refused; 2. To participate in group therapy to learn more about how to deal with herself in times of crisis-what she also refused because she does not believe that therapists can help through the crisis; and 3. To seek help when the crisis come-what is the moment we are dealing right now.

I want to say that is not easy for me and for the family to accept this unstable situations and it crashes directly with my worldview in having a “perfect family.” Emotionally it has also affected my process to write my dissertation at Andrews. Every single day is different one, and in every one brings its “surprises.” As she is not comfortable with doctors, therapies and medicines; what has helped her is that she is in the second of four/five years taking psychology undergraduate program at York University. I have seen that the classes she has taken have helped her to understand, accept and deal with the illness through knowledge.

What has bothered me in this second ache is that, as I give too much importance to have and keep the family with love, care, respect, commitment, healthy, and with God’s direction, this point has challenged my worldview. She has found some peace through her studies; however, I am struggling to keep my commitment with her and go forward with my marriage commitments. Right now, my beliefs in regarding a family and all the things that are important as a family, are in conflict. My worldview is in conflict too. I would say that I will have to make a choice soon.

My third ache comes from the expectation about my future professional life. I have a part time job as a music school director and teacher. This job brings some comfort

because I can plan and manage my time in regarding the classes and students. I also can manage the time I can dedicate to attend the classes and the assignments I have in studying in two universities. The issue is that the money coming from this job is not enough.

I am also taking the IEP bridging program at York University. This program is directed to the immigrants that moved to Canada and carry a good background experiences. The Canada government gives the opportunity to return to the university for two years in order to train, recycle and improve the knowledge according to the industry. It is not an “obligation” but we are expected to do it. Through this program, the Canadian landscape is presented to us as well as the job market opportunities, and how to target and get there. It is a very good program. The bridging program at York University I will be finishing this summer.

At the same time, I am taking the Ph.D. program at Andrews with a personal goal to finish it until maximum in the summer 2016. What aches me is that, since I am taking these two universities, the money has been short. Yes, this is an option because I can manage my time and distributed it among my part time job and these two universities. My goal is to return to the business field, which is my original area. So I need to finish both universities as quickly as possible and enter in the market job to find a good one. There is a pressure because I have to repay the education loan I took from the Canadian government that has given me the financial condition to study at Andrews. The repayment starts right after I finish it; however, the market job is unpredictable and I do not know for how long I will take to find a good job. So in this third and final ache, my

worldview states that God will open the doors for me. I have to believe and trust in Him. I also believe that my decision to move forward with my education will bring me some future benefits.

The values and beliefs that have shaped my worldview

My worldview is rooted in God. I am a Christian and a SDA believer. So as a Christian and leader I have my core values, beliefs and qualities distributed in the following: God is all; God's plan to have a family; my parents, a good framework/reference in conducting my family; home, a piece of heaven in earth; friends and relatives, a way to serve them; open heart for changes; a leader with a vision; positive thought, positive person; honesty is always the best policy; trust has to be earned; an individual of integrity; a risk-taker; committed/open-minded; optimistic; always trying to reach the balance in life; motivator, dynamic, able to form groups and lead teams; achiever, strategic, learner, communicator, includer, focus; entrepreneur, creative and pro-active; an individual that considers and understands people how they are; try as best as I can to reach success; and faith - ask God's hand and direction for everything.

Together with the values, beliefs and qualities that have been shaping me along the years; culturally, I have to express my way of thinking through a combination of factors such as live actions, words, letters, and collectively when working in teams, just to name a few. These approaches shows that flexibility and openness are very important qualities that I have to maintain looking forward to improve my cultural background. So as well defined above, worldviews, cultures and values are connected positively in my

approach of leadership as my beliefs through them, interfere in my behaviors as a Christian leader. Ideally my behaviors are headed by and consistently with my beliefs and values.

How do we relate to people? The “isms”

As stated above through Sire’s seven questions, as a Christian Theist, I believe in God and follow the Bible as my book of revelation about the God becoming knowledgeable Himself through the scriptures and given a variety of instructions belonging to many areas of our lives to us, as human beings. I accept and defend God and His creation, as well as I hope to see Him soon and live together. As simple as is. I also accept Ellen G. White and her writings in translating, explaining and expanding the Bible knowledge.

On the other hand, when facing a discussion with other’s people worldviews, we have to do it with open mind and respect, not using a tone that shows traces of provocation and/or arrogance in defend our own worldview. So, it is always wise to be careful when expelling out the other’s worldviews.

Many “isms” are presented as a form to help people to relate to people and to understand themselves and their worldviews such as Naturalism, Deism and Islamism. I will present them in a short understanding.

Naturalism

Naturalism asserts that the world is of a piece; everything we are and do is included in the space-time continuum whose most basic elements are those described by physics, and that we are the evolved products of natural selection, which operates without intention, foresight or purpose (Tenets of Naturalism, n.d.). According to the Tenets of Naturalism, everything is included in the physical universe, or molded by the various progressions such as biological, physical, social and psychological that science describes.

Working on my Christian worldview with a naturalist worldview would clash beginning with the fact that, under the naturalist point of view, they claim that there is no God and they make the replacement with modern science. I do believe that science has brought many innovations and discoveries that have helped many other fields such as medicine, technology; however, we can never forget that there is a God that is the creator of everything that encompasses life. Science can create almost everything, but they cannot create a human being. This process, only God can.

Deism

Deism presents another view to understand life and related situations. It preaches that Deism has a lot to offer to us and to society (World Union of Deists, n.d.). Deism claims the knowledge of God can be found throughout nature; therefore, deism is not a “revealed” religion. It presents itself as a natural religion. The natural religion/philosophy of deism frees those who embrace it from the inconsistencies of superstition and the negativity of fear that are so strongly represented in all of the “revealed” religions such as

Judaism, Christianity and Islam (World Union of Deists, n.d.). They are called “revealed” by the reason that they present many books having God in the center of their revelation.

Working my Christian worldview with Theist viewpoint, I would reinforce that both believe in a creator God; however, the deism sees that even with the existence of a creator, he does not pay attention to the creatures. He does not requires worship, the judgements of the behavior, prayers to be answered or promise that you can have a new life after death. The Theism does exactly the opposite, God is the creator and He does take care about everyone.

Islamism

According to Islam (n.d.) Islamism is an important religion, which shares many beliefs and practices with Christianity and Judaism. Furthermore, Islam is a rational religion: “The vilest of creatures are those who choose to be deaf and dumb and do not use their reason” (Qur’an 8:2). Muhammad used to remind his followers that God created the reason first, and then the other things. Thus, it is an obligation for the believers to take special responsibility for one’s faith and actions. Islam’s appeal resides in the ability to connect the piety of faith, the covenant, and then organizing elements to produce dominant resistance to foreign invasion where crucial dimension is not economic but social (Islam, n.d.).

The pillars of Islam are: 1. Faith in ONE God and Muhammed the Prophet; 2. Five daily prayers facing to Meca; 3. Sharing or giving money to the poor is required, not optional; 4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan. Muslims cannot eat or drink anything

during the daylight hours (period of spiritual and moral renewal); and 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca: Once in their lives, IF they can afford it (Dutch, n.d.; Kash, n.d.).

One of the assignments for this class was to prepare a role-play, choosing one “ism”, study and present it for the class. I did chose Islamism because I was interested to know about this “weird” people, their beliefs, values and principles, and their roots. According to DeSantis (n.d.), Islam is the fastest growing religion around the world. Canada is one of the countries that, in the last decades, has received thousands of Islamite people from all around the world. I live in a neighborhood here in Toronto that presents a high percentage of Islamic people. I also study at York University, where there is a big concentration of Islamic students. It is very interesting to observe these people in how they dress, communicate and express themselves to the other people. We know that the Islam has its roots in God, but they do not believe in Jesus in the same way as Christians, believe. We are all kind of “cousins” by the Abraham’s sons and daughters side; however, they follow their principles through Mohammed, its prophet - the messenger of God.

So with an open mind I could understand their beliefs and with respect, I had the opportunity to talk to some friends at York about their history. It was such a very good experience I had been studying a bit about this people. My worldview was reinforced on the God’s principles and the Bible was re-emphasized as the unique and the true God’s word to me.

How my education connects to my worldview

My education also has shaped my worldview. Education and learning are constantly taking place in a person's life (Knight, 2006, p. 108). I can divide my education in two parts: my home education and school education. The most important part of my home education is that one that I could learn and receive from my parents. They gave me a Christian education and taught me the basic principles, values, ethics, and built the foundation for the person I am today. When by father's side, he used to instructed me saying that: "My son, education will always give you the skills and knowledge, but they won't be enough. Study as much as you can because it will help you to make better decisions in your life. Have a good relationship with God and ask Him humility and wisdom. Finally, do as best as you can for the people around you."

In some level we tend to reflect in our lives the level of education and boundaries we were taught in our early ages. So the education we teach to our children is in some way a combination of that one we received from our parents. If we feel that it was a good one, we automatically transfer to them. If we feel that it was not a good one, we take knowledge and do it in different ways. My children are 10 and 12 years old and I would like to apply the knowledge I have now back few years ago. Even with my knowledge, I would say that I would do some things in a different way. By May 2016, my parents will celebrate their 50th anniversary and I am very thankful to God for this celebration as well as the education they have given to me. They have helped me as a person, father, husband, friend, son, brother, educator, leader, etc.

My school education is a combination of Christian and non-Christian education. After I have finished my non-Christian elementary and middle school in my home town, I moved to Sao Paulo to attend high school in a Seventh-day Adventist Academy. After have finished it, I moved to Curitiba to continue my studies. In Curitiba I attended college and took the Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, followed by the Specialization in Finance, and a MBA in Business Administration/Finance. Parallel to these degrees, I took three years as a Bachelor's in Music (Piano solo). As I had already started my piano soloist career earlier, for multiple reasons, I did not complete this degree.

If compared to Anyon (1980)'s study, I can say that I always had the opportunity to participate in the "Affluent Professional School" the fourth class of school among the five contained in this study. Regardless of the situation, my parents always gave me the best study they could afford. Repeating my father's words again, he used to say: "My son, education will always give you the skills and knowledge, but they won't be enough. Study as much as you can because it will help you to make better decisions in your life."

I left Brazil to live in US in 2002 and from US to Canada in 2012. So I use to say that my education/learning/schooling is always a working in progress. I am taking the Ph.D. program in Leadership at Andrews University in US and a Bridging program at York University in Toronto. As English is not my first language, every single class I take is a challenge. I experience that it takes almost the double of the time to have a complete understanding about the readings and to elaborate projects and complete assignments.

From the various education philosophies theories I have learned, I sympathize with ontology (being) and epistemology (knowing). Knight (2006) claims that “Ontology is the study of the nature of existence, or what it means for anything to be” (p.18). It is how we make sense of being or existence. On the other hand, Epistemology is the study of knowledge or how we recognize the things we know. In a practical way, epistemology is how we make sense of the processes by which we make sense. So based in these two concepts, and in a simple philosophical thought, I like to think that “ontology comes ‘before’ epistemology” in the same view that “Zero appears ‘before’ One”. For example: you cannot study something which you do not have an example of. In general, this is our life and this is one of the reasons I am taking the leadership program (LP) of Andrews University (AU), always seeking more knowledge.

As Christians we believe that everything began with God. God made everything real. Sire (2009) present many question which his first question is What is prime reality- the really real? To this we might answer: God, or the gods, or the material cosmos (Sire, 2009, p. 22). The LP of AU is summarized by these two philosophical dimensions about being and knowing where: being works with the individual bringing his/her personal and professional experiences and sharing with other his/her “cultures, beliefs, worldviews, and theoretical orientations”. Knowing is represented by the paradoxical unity of theory and practice and as leaders we can transmit and generate knowledge. (Andrews University: Leadership Handbook 2014-15). In my understanding, I am participating actively in these two philosophical dimensions in this leadership program of Andrews University.

Anyways, living, working and studying in three different countries, and receiving a cross cultural education; I can affirm that directly and indirectly, my worldview has been influenced by these cultures. However, Thompson (2014) states that “Great leaders are always learning” (p. 20).

The constructivism approach

I see in my education the constructivism approach. According to Knight (2006) constructivism means that I am constantly revising and upgrading my knowledge. It dictates the way I can learn seeking new understanding or ways to fulfill my knowledge with “new” things. Basically it says that I can construct my own knowledge through experiencing things and reflecting on them. In some way, is how I construct my worldview about things making some type of measurement about the ideas and experiences already acquired against the new information where I can change or discard them. It is a continuous learning process through life; where we are actively creating our own knowledge.

This approach makes me uncomfortable by the fact that the quantity of “knowledge” I have today, may not be enough to keep me as a successful leader, educator and professional few years ahead. What does it mean? The education and learning acquisition’s system are in a constant and evolving change. I have to analyze myself constantly and compare to level and quantity of information it is necessary to exceed.

The principal goal of education is to create individuals who are capable of doing new things, not simple of repeating what other generations have done (Theory of Constructivism - Jean Piaget) (Constructivism, n.d.). So my learning process as well as my need to seek new knowledge never ends. I have to be innovative and reflective in order to add more knowledge to myself.

My worldview as leader

As leader, I also need to understand who I am. Reading the article "*Learning while leading: The Andrews University leadership program*" written by Drs. Freed, Covrig, and Baumgartner (2011), on page 37 it states: "Leaders need to understand who they are-and they achieve this understanding in part by learning the significance of their own life stories." This citation caught my attention, and I would like to reflect in the first part where it says "*Leaders need to understand who they are*". As early as 42 B.C., Publilius Syrus proposed: "It matters not what you are thought to be, but what you are" (Whetten & Cameron, 2011, p. 57). Freud (1956) once asserted that to be completely honest with oneself is the best effort and individual can make, because complete honesty requires a continual search for more information about the self and a desire for self-improvement (Whetten & Cameron, 2011, p. 58).

I would like to extend Freud's view point adding that we are not able to improve ourselves or advance to new competencies unless we determinedly know the levels of abilities and capacity we have. This is a point of recognition and evaluation about our

current abilities and deficiencies versus what is expected at end. The realization that we may not be totally adequate or knowledgeable is sometimes difficult to accept because seeking self-knowledge is a prerequisite for our personal growth. However, for a variety of reasons we might be attempted to avoid seeking information as well as evaluate ourselves because it may make us feel inferior. Whetten and Cameron (2011) declares that self-knowledge will help you understand your own taken-for-granted assumptions, trigger points, sensitive line, comfort zone, strengths and weaknesses, and so forth. I would say that this is an important part of our self-awareness which is to understand who we are.

As a leader, I am also a proactive person by nature. I try to learn, reach a high level of home and school education, and acquire knowledge as much as possible for few reasons including that they can grow me as a person and as a professional as well. Cloud and Townsend (1992) state that “Proactive people show you what they love, what they want, what they purpose, and what they stand for” plus “Proactive people are able to love others as themselves, they have mutual respect, they are able to die to self and not return evil for evil” (p.98). This is me.

So as leader in the position to exert leadership, if I understand the complexity of my own culture, working by worldview and values I am inserted, I can better understand my own behavior and values. As important as the understanding of my own worldview is how I deal, interpret and accept other’s worldviews. I would say that, the leader’s role would be a complete understanding of culture, applying the worldview, values and

principles in a right way moving forward the vision. Doing so, I can exert a better and successful leadership.

Affirming my worldview

I have been working for Pentecostal churches since 2004 including churches in US and Canada. Even being called as Christians denominations, the Pentecostal and SDA churches have different worldviews. Connecting my worldview to the Pentecostal churches where I used to work in US; I experienced a reaffirmation about my faith in God as a SDA believer. Being a Christian and belonging to the SDA church, my worldview was proved in 2006 by the time I first applied for a US Green Card.

It was not a professional issue I had/have with the Pentecostal churches where I use to work with, but I see my worldview clashing with their worldviews in in the following religious principles:

1. As SDA we keep the 7th day, the Sabbath, as the holy day to rest according to the ten commandments, and the Pentecostals rest on Sundays;
2. We believe in the spirit of prophecy and they do not;
3. We believe in the Ellen G. White as a God's prophet and they practically, repeal her writings;
4. We preach the "sweet" and the "bitter" of the Bible through all the 66 books, and looks like they are limited to only few versus coming from the "conflicting" books i.e. Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Revelations; and

5. They believe in the baptism by the holy spirit where they talk in tongues, and we do not interpret in the same way.

Anyways, these are and will be points that sometimes I have to defend with some Pentecostal's members when they approach me as a SDA working with them. But in all these "moments" that my religious worldview is confronted, I always use to thank them by the opportunity to know a bit more about their beliefs as well as to show them the answers based in the our major book, the Holy Bible.

My worldview being tested

Why I did not get my US Green Card in 2006? I am an Adventist and a Sabbath keeper period. As immigrants we know how important is to be a "legal immigrant" in the country. Since I moved to US in 2002 and to Canada in 2012, my gross income comes from my job as music school director and teacher for Pentecostal churches in these both countries. Working for these churches, I take my team of teachers and they gave me the rooms I need, so we teach the churches' members as well as the community around them. From 2002 until 2009 I used to work for All the Nations Baptist Church, a Pentecostal church in Danbury, CT. The church was the biggest Brazilian church in town with around 300 members. From 2009 until 2012 I shared my work with the Brazilian Assembly of God, in Danbury, CT.

In 2006, the senior pastor approached me saying that as my work permit (visa H1B1) as music school director and teacher was expiring, he was offering to sign as my

sponsor for the Green Card immigration papers as well “If” I accepted to be baptized in his church, so as a church member I could take part in the church’s liturgy and be the leader in the church music department. Instantaneously I looked in his eyes and said to him: “Pastor Ophir, I would like to thank you so much for the opportunity to work here in these last 3 years, but as you already know, I am a Christian that believe in the Adventist principles and that I will not change my beliefs for a card and/or a citizenship.” He replied to me using the following words: “I know that you would not accept.” He concluded: Based in your integrity, honesty and hard work, let’s try; anyways I would like to sign the paper works for you and give you the US Green card and citizenship as your sponsor.

Here enters my SDA worldview into the Pentecostal culture churches where I work. We are Christians that accept and believe in the same God. However, we have different worldviews. The churches know who I am (Adventist), from where I come, they know my beliefs, and they know that I am a Sabbath keeper; they also know my professional work not only by my daily work and parent’s recommendation but the senior pastors talk to each other and there is a recognition about my personal, and professional work, values and ethics. God has opened these doors in every church and there is a mutual respect between us. They are happy with my work.

I worked for three different Pentecostal churches in US, and when I moved from US to Canada, the pastor offered to give a call and present my recommendations to his friend who is a pastor for the biggest Brazilian Pentecostal church here in Toronto, the Christ for the Nations Assembly of God where I have been working since I moved to

Canada. The pastor here in Canada knows my work and worldviews through his friend from US, and now by my personal and professional relationship with him and the church.

As a result of my Christian worldview in the US Green Card process, even with the awareness that I was not a member, in 2006, the All Nations Baptist Church applied for my Green Card which was denied by the reason I was not a Baptist church member. We kind already expected the answer. However, the pastor Ophir said: “I am going to try to keep you here at our church through a Religious visa (R1). A new immigration process was filled and the immigration accepted it. Receiving the immigration approval about the R1 visa, I stayed in the church until 2009. In 2009 the Greater New York Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Churches, in New York, assumed my US immigration history and signed to give sequence in my papers. I am still waiting for US Green Card final interview. I have lived in North America for almost 13 years as a legal immigrant in both countries. God knows everything and I am proud of myself to have kept my beliefs.

Independently of the many ways and concepts that I have seen in regarding in how to approach and define worldview, Sire (2009) caught my attention where he says: “our worldview generally lies so deeply embedded in our subconscious that unless we have reflected long and hard, we are unaware of what it is” (p.21). This is true, real and profound to me.

Conclusion

I am very happy to have had this opportunity to express my worldviews through different ways in this class. This course was not a small experience. According to the weekly assignments, forums, discussions, role play, and the reflection paper; every single one brought its difficulties and/or challenges by the relevance of the topic requested. The greatest difficulty was to shift my thinking to accommodate so many new ideas while at the same time try to present them in a way that were clear, concise, meaningful and technically correct. On the other hand, through the difficulties and/or challenges I found the opportunities to grow, share and develop my worldview knowledge. These were such a rewarding experience.

I think that the assignment to write the reflection paper on the “quiet weeks” worked very well. It gave me the opportunity to think, seat and write step by step. Certainly, some of the readings were easy to produce a brief statement while others were more difficult. The difficulty was basically in the fact that as English is not my first language, I take a bit more time to have a full comprehension about the readings, so I usually take more time to assimilate, understand and explore the maximum of the readings without losing its meaning, and to present them accordingly in the forums and assignments.

The course opened my eyes as a worldview thinker. In a certain way, my worldview in regarding to some topics were changed such as how to understand the “isms”. I started this course presenting my way to see worldview with a limited level of knowledge and skills. I finish the course with the sensation that, even with deficiency and proficiency in the language, my worldview, knowledge and skills were expanded. I am not reinforcing my weakness in the language, but there is some struggle in the process.

I truly believe that the feedbacks received from Dr. Freed were very important and valuable. The only way to discover your strengths is through feedback analysis (Drucker, 1999). They put me in the right track because they pointed my weakness out and helped me to present my ideas clearly and technically correct. Thanks so much Dr. Freed.

This course promoted a change in my way to see and interpret important facts that have shaped and influenced my life through the worldviews I have been assimilating along the years. Thus, academic writing through this Reflection Paper is also about building my knowledge and skills to reach success in writing. Combining the reading, practicing and the comments by Dr. Freed, I believe that this semester was fundamental in my journey toward the dissertation as well as to the end of the program. Indeed, I do have a goal to be reached; there are evaluations in the assignments because I need the grade. However, I would say that the stage I am experiencing now is just preparing me for the next phase of my life as a Ph.D. student/graduate.

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