

## Improving Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy through a Cosmopolitan Approach to Social Studies Education

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*Democracy in a pluralistic society depends on individual and group participation. One of the goals of social studies education is to instill a sense of civic efficacy. Some people are able to consistently participate in democratic processes, yet many are not able to because of cultural and societal marginalization. The assimilationist approach to building national unity forces individuals to give up their cultural identity in order to be accepted by the mainstream culture. This loss of identity can cause resentment and alienation, which leads to a fragmenting of the national society, and decreasing national unity. Globalization has increased the diversity of American society, and ignoring the relationships that individuals have in their local, national, and global communities can contribute to the marginalization of diverse cultural groups. A cosmopolitan approach to social studies education can reinforce democratic principles that are valued in the United States by acknowledging ethnic and cultural diversity and multicultural citizenship. This can increase national unity and individual civic efficacy while also celebrating the diversity found in our communities.*

Keywords: postcolonial theory, globalization, multicultural citizenship, cosmopolitanism, transformative citizenship education.

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Several processes operating in the modern world are bringing the issue of diverse cultural populations and how to work with it while maintaining national unity to the forefront. Globalization and immigration are causing the mixing of cultures and ethnicities in nations and regions such as the United States and western Europe. This phenomenon is being dealt with by homogenizing the culture through an assimilationist approach in an attempt to build national unity by assimilating citizens into a majority culture. An alternative to this approach is cosmopolitanism, which, though it has various definitions and means of practice, generally has a global view and recognizes the differences between people. It holds that there is much to learn from these differences.

Postcolonial globalization has tended to perpetuate the political, economic, and social structure of dominant western countries and cultures (Spring, 2008). This hierarchy has often marginalized minority groups in many ways, including education, segregation of communities, unequal representation, and disparate opportunities. A further effect on minority populations is the control of communication and standardization of knowledge by large, multinational publishers, that causes the marginalization of groups whose cultural icons are not represented in this knowledge. Globalization also influences individual, local, national, and global identities and allegiances and requires education to address national unity, multicultural citizenship, and global sensibilities (Arnett, 2002; Banks, 2001; Parker, 2008).

How a nation-state develops policies and educational reforms to deal with diverse cultural populations can cause marginalization of minority groups, loss of identity, and fragmenting of connections between youth and the culture of their families. In particular, forcing youth into a mainstream majority culture can cause them to lose connection with their support groups in their minority communities.

Cosmopolitanism in education by the definition used here recognizes the differences between people, and holds that there is much to learn from these differences (Appiah, 2006; Hansen, 2010). Cosmopolitanism is proposed as an alternative to the assimilation method to include acceptance of individual cultures while maintaining national unity.

This article is an exploration of the influences of postcolonial globalization on our communities, the development of multicultural identities, the need for a cosmopolitan approach to social studies education, and identification of educational approaches that include enabling people in a pluralistic society to engage in their community as active citizens.

### **Postcolonial Globalization**

Theories of postcolonial globalization can help explain how rich and dominant powers sustain their political and economic agendas (Apple, 2000; Apple, 2005; Brown & Lauder, 2006; Spring, 2008). They are based on the influences of economically and politically dominant countries on social structures or systems such as education in other countries today. These theories also claim that Western education in world powers such as the United States, the European Union, and Japan aims to produce a population that meets national economic demands and maintains economic dominance.

Spring (2008) discusses German political scientist Weiler's theory that particular knowledge and power work hand-in-hand as knowledge produced by a transnational system legitimizes the very power that created it. This theory holds that the postcolonial structure perpetuates itself by supporting an education system that in turn supports the structure. Apple (2000) provides examples of how "official knowledge" found in textbooks in the United States serves as a societal "reference point" established by particular groups of people perpetuating the status quo of the dominant elite. The content of textbooks adopted by most American school districts often excludes or minimalizes the experiences and perspectives of minorities and groups such as women, children, African-American, Latino, and other cultures. Furthermore, the content, cultural portrayal, beliefs, and values included in texts often become the official knowledge that is required learning for standardized and criterion referenced tests.

Markets and ideology often drive the content published in textbooks and select forces dominate this market. Apple (2000) explains,

Texas and California (and now increasingly perhaps Florida) have the most power over what counts as official knowledge... Texas spends tens of millions of dollars on instructional materials and has a rather narrow policy of approving five textbooks or less (the minimum is two) for each subject. This puts it in an exceptionally strong position to influence the content of texts as publishers compete to gain their share of what is obviously a lucrative part of the market (p. 61).

An example of minority group minimization can be seen in the recent Texas Board of Education exclusion of most minority historical figures from the state history standards and

curriculum (Stutz, 2010; Farney, 2010). Because Texas is such a large textbook market, a publisher may adopt the subjective Texas history and curriculum, which impacts other states that have limited choices of textbooks to use in their school districts (Apple, 2000; Stutz, 2010). The global dissemination of this official knowledge is also market and ideologically driven and perpetuated by control of communication by multinational corporations operating in other countries (Apple 2000).

Although it may be impossible to mitigate all of the negative influences of globalization, educators can include multiple perspectives in their curricula and maintain an awareness of the positive and negative effects of globalization. Issues concerning current social and educational realities include migration, diasporas, identity formation, and the effects of race, culture, class, and gender in society (Spring, 2008). Individual, group, national, and global identities and affiliations are prominent topics concerning globalization and citizenship education (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Citizenship education, which is part of social studies, needs to address the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in our schools and communities. The diversity found in the American schools requires recognition and expanded approaches to citizenship and national identity.

### **Identities and Allegiances**

In the modern globalized age, establishing and maintaining national identities by assimilating all citizens into a single American culture, an assimilationist approach, does not include individual cultural identities in the United States and may weaken national identification. Banks (2008) observed that an assimilationist approach marginalized German ethnic Turks and United Kingdom Muslims in schools. In these cases, the marginalized groups tried to preserve their ethnic identities, but were marginalized in their nation-state (Banks, 2008).

A mechanism by which the assimilationist approach marginalizes people is by creating an “ideal” citizen that is not represented in all cultural groups (Ortloff, 2009). When people from diverse cultures do not see themselves represented in the curriculum or national story, as seen in the new Texas history textbooks, it may lead to a potential disconnectedness in schools and society.

Conversely, embracing multiculturalism can enhance solidarity and strengthen a nation by reducing prejudice and mistrust and does not threaten the welfare of a state (Kymlicka & Banting, 2006). Banks (2001) states, “One of the challenges to pluralistic democratic nation-states is to provide opportunities for cultural and ethnic groups to maintain components of their community cultures while at the same time constructing a nation-state in which diverse groups are structurally included and to which they feel allegiance” (p. 5). However, citizenship education has taken an assimilationist approach by assuming that individuals give up their home culture, language and identity to participate in the national civic culture (Banks, 2001; Kymlicka & Banting, 2006; Theiss-Morse, 2009; M. M. Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard, 2004). This approach has left millions of citizens marginalized from being active and transformative citizens (Banks, 2008).

In an era of globalization, establishing a personal, cultural, national, and global identity is a complex process that may be more complex for cultural minorities. Harvard cultural psychologist, C. Suárez-Orozco (2004) describes identity formation of ethnic immigrants and their children by relating to Erickson’s theory that the development of self-identity is influenced by the views of others. C. Suárez-Orozco also refers to Parham’s theory of *spiraling* through

various stages of identity development and suggests that identity formation is “fluid and contextually driven.” C. Suárez-Orozco (2004) explains the development of achieved and ascribed identities, emanating from an individual’s sense of belonging and how others categorize them culturally.

C. Suárez-Orozco (2004) argues that ascribed identities are stronger for ethnic minority groups than Western European descendants in the United States, because over time cultural distinctions lessen as accents are lost, names change, and style of dress becomes similar to the majority, though this can be more challenging for minorities of color (C. Suárez-Orozco, 2004). Ascribed identities are also influenced by the “social mirror” reflected by dominant groups, which reflects intolerable difference and discrimination from the majority in countries like the United States and Western Europe with large immigrant communities (C. Suárez-Orozco, 2004). Some people resist this mirror, but for others it often perpetuates a negative self-image that can cause hopelessness and a negative self-fulfilling prophecy in young people.

C. Suárez-Orozco (2004) also suggests that the greater degree of differences between the majority and individual cultures, the more likely young people will struggle with their identity as they adapt and navigate the social order of their community, thus affecting their development of a positive sense of self and civic efficacy. Social studies education that takes a cosmopolitan approach can be more inclusive of students’ diversity and culture, thus positively impacting their sense of self and civic efficacy, a primary goal of social studies education (Parker, 2012).

As described by C. Suárez-Orozco (2004), marginalizing young people in society and from the structures of social mobility may develop an adversarial stance of adaptation as seen with many disenfranchised people on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder in societies around the world:

On one hand, immigrants tend to develop cultural models and social practices that serve them well in terms of educational adaptations and outcomes. On the other hand, ‘involuntary minorities,’ after generations of living with structural inequities and symbolic violence, tend to develop social practices and cultural models that remove them from investing in schooling as the dominant strategy for status mobility (pp. 186-7).

One such adversarial style is when the perception of doing well in school is seen as “acting white” (Ogbu, 2007; Fordham, 2008). This is problematic if American national and educational goals are to provide equal access to opportunities and develop a positive national identity and civic efficacy. Though receiving a diploma or degree guarantees neither financial or social mobility, nor the development of a sense of contributing citizenship; the lack of education appears to severely limit professional opportunities and decreases (legal) resources. C. Suárez-Orozco (2004) identifies that the likelihood of being drawn to gangs or dropping out of school increases when one adopts an adversarial perception of the dominant culture.

Not only can adversarial styles of cultural adaptation threaten the well-being and social mobility of individuals, but it can also threaten the nation-state. It is in the national interest to provide a sense of inclusion to all members of society through teaching multiple perspectives and cultural sensitivities as part of social studies education. This will facilitate developing a stronger, more united pluralistic democracy, and extend empathy beyond the nation’s borders. As Thornton (2005) asserts, “Both unreflective patriotism and censorship are undemocratic in intent and close off critical consideration of viewpoints other than those asserted by some individual or

group as representing the American view” (p. 84). Immigrants and recently appointed citizens are often excluded because they don’t have cultural understanding of the majority view promoted in schools and texts, nor do schools and text often include immigrant viewpoints.

Also, assimilation into the mainstream culture can alienate people from their own ethnic group (Fordham, 2008; Ogbu, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999), which takes away support from social networks and connectedness with friends, family, and cultural affiliations (C. Suárez-Orozco, 2004). To maintain support groups, a transcultural identity can be developed, which allows people to be a part of and move between various communities’ contributions to their livelihood because it expands the cultural and social capital available to them (Bourdieu, 2007). Pollock and Van Reken (1999) identify young people with these identity traits as Third Culture Kids, who develop cultural traits that are neither fully representative of their parent’s culture (first culture), nor of their host culture (second culture), but a created, shared, and learned combination that allows them to maneuver between cultures, groups, and institutions (third culture).

Among youth engaged in bicultural styles, the culturally constructed social structures and patterns of social control of their immigrant parents and elders maintain a degree of legitimacy. Learning standard English and doing well in school are viewed as competencies that do not compromise their sense of who they are. These youth network seamlessly with members of their own ethnic group as well as with students, teachers, employers, colleagues, and friends of other backgrounds (C. Suárez-Orozco, 2004).

Ultimately, however, individuals develop loyalty to the nation when they feel that they receive reciprocal benefits and rights. Kymlicka and Banting (2006) recognize the importance of national identity contributing to the support of the systems found in a nation-state, but they also recognize how multiculturalism can support and enhance national unity. Multiculturalism contributes to national unity by destigmatizing cultural differences, which in turn contributes to treating one another with respect and dignity. Perceiving each other as equals worthy of respect is one of the first steps in uniting a population. Multicultural education, along with nation-building practices, such as citizenship education, contributes to national solidarity. In addition, multiculturalism perceived as a national narrative unites a larger population that includes diverse groups of people (Kymlicka and Banting, 2006).

Multicultural citizenship can also help balance diversity and unity in a nation-state (Kymlicka, 1995) and help to facilitate upholding the democratic ideals that many nation-states proclaim. It can also, however, neglect global awareness and sensibilities and environmental issues that connect societies around the world. Banks (2001) takes multicultural citizenship a step further than Kymlicka by including global identification balanced with cultural and national identifications, which, combined with citizenship education that enhances a sense of civic efficacy, contributes to a more inclusive and humane local and global community (Banks, 2001).

Social studies education, which should include multiple perceptions and multicultural citizenship that accommodates varying identities in a united nation-state, can help young people identify and celebrate not only their similarities, but also their differences. Approaching diversity with acceptance may contribute to individuals developing a sense of belonging and loyalty to a democratic and pluralistic nation like the United States. One type of education that can contribute to these goals is cosmopolitanism.

### **Cosmopolitanism**

Two schools of thought on the definition of cosmopolitanism exist. One definition holds that it is a type of world citizenship; an allegiance to humanity as opposed to a singular state allegiance (Nussbaum, 2002). A second definition is that cosmopolitanism recognizes the differences between people and holds that there is much to learn from these differences (Appiah, 2006; Hansen, 2010).

There are also opponents of cosmopolitanism who suggest that its approach to humanism creates a homogeneous global society that is a detriment to unity, identity, and loyalty within a nation-state (Barber, 2002; McConnell, 2002; Taylor, 2002). Opponents believe there is a perceived lack of care for those closest to an individual, such as family, community, and nation, in exchange for global allegiance. However, Appiah (2002) and Sen (2002) address this critique by referring to the ability and longing of individuals to acquire multiple affiliations and allegiances to local, national, and global identities. Appiah (2002) suggests that one can be a cosmopolitan patriot, maintaining attachment to their home while appreciating other diverse places with diverse cultures. Nussbaum (2002) further argues that individuals can and should pay attention to those closest to us, but that we also extend that behavior beyond our borders and boundaries to include all people, all human-kind.

Some people will spend their whole lives in one location, sustaining local cultures and traditions, and others will move within and between countries creating a hybrid or multiple cultural identities (Appiah, 2002; Arnett, 2002). No matter the lifestyle, we can strive to include, learn from, and celebrate, not only our similarities, but also our differences. This rooted or grounded approach to cosmopolitanism can help create a balance between national affiliations and individual and global identities. Furthermore, it can facilitate inquiry and analysis of ideas and concepts that enhance our daily lives.

Allegiance to humanity and our global society does not exclude allegiances to a nation, community, or family. As Nussbaum (2002) suggests, one is not required to forego ethnic or religious identifications, but should include all human beings as part of our sphere of influence, and include “interlocking commonality” in our deliberations. Education can and should include multicultural identities and global sensibilities. Neglecting to include international affiliations and ideas in education ignores the current realities of the diversity found in our local and global communities.

Mitchell and Parker (2008) describe Nussbaum’s concentric circles of affinity starting with the self in the center and then expanding to the family, school, community, state, nation, and global humanity. This view of the self is often used in K-12 education in the United States to teach social studies and civic education. Social studies in lower elementary grades often start with the self, family, and school and expands to the community, state, nation, and world in upper elementary grades. The nation and world are further addressed in middle and high school. This approach is commonly referred to as the expanding horizons approach to social studies education, which has been deemed insufficient because of current global realities (Mitchell & Parker, 2008; NCSS, 2011; Wade, 2002)

Wade (2002) counters that people do not consecutively develop affiliations with the self expanding to the community, state, nation and world, but rather these affiliations develop simultaneously. Young people today are exposed to varied cultures, issues, people, and countries due to improved means of transportation, communication, technology and movement of people.

Mitchell and Parker (2008) further challenge Nussbaum's sequential development of affiliations. "We believe both Nussbaum and her critics reify these categories by abstracting them from the everyday local and global practices through which space is produced and allegiance secured" (Mitchell & Parker, 2008, pp. 777-778). It was originally thought that children were not able to understand concepts related to the world outside their immediate surroundings until they were older, however this initial belief has been challenged. There is research and theory that suggests children are capable of understanding more "abstract and distant" concepts and spaces (Levstik & Barton, 2008; Mitchell & Parker, 2008; Wade, 2002).

Mitchell and Parker (2008) support the notion that young people today develop global affiliations due to their experiences and various modes of communication. They argue that these experiences allow young people to imagine the interdependence and interconnectedness of societies. These experiences and modes of communication can be seen in movement of peoples between nations, the use of media, and in the use of technology to gain awareness of various regions, people, and cultures around the world. Mitchell and Parker (2008) state that a majority of students in their case study demonstrated an awareness of global interdependence, though the examples of student expressions included in their article does not illustrate how the world is interdependent, just that sentiment should include the world beyond a nation-state. Some of the student expressions do, however, reflect Mitchell and Parkers' argument that young people are able to visualize and relate to global entities and do not follow a set development of an expanding horizons pattern.

Hansen (2010) suggests that we must know ourselves, our individual and local culture, but inquire about and learn from diverse ideas and approaches, "What characterizes cosmopolitanism from the ground up is a fusion, sometimes tenuous and tension-laden, of receptivity to the new and loyalty to the known" (p. 5). Hansen's view of cosmopolitanism emphasizes learning from diverse cultures, traditions, and ideas. This type of cosmopolitanism takes into account the diverse experiences of individuals. It is appropriate because this type of cosmopolitanism includes all citizens and residents and their views and experiences, and does not marginalize minorities by focusing on the dominant culture. It is an approach that has the potential to enhance civic efficacy of all students. Furthermore, Hansen's view of cosmopolitanism would allow for young people of the dominant culture, with little knowledge of cultures other than their own, an opportunity to expand their own paradigm.

Hansen (2010) states, "Cosmopolitanism is not an identity that elbows aside other dimensions of being a person. It is phasic. It comes and goes. It finds expression in particular moments, spaces, and interactions" (p. 5). This approach to cosmopolitanism leaves room for other aspects of citizens' identity (i.e., national, cultural, and individual). Furthermore, Mitchell and Parker (2008) argue that our conceptualization and understanding of our local, national, and global communities is a continual fluxuating process, similar to Hansen (2010) and C. Suárez-Orozco's (2004) explanation of identity development.

In addition to including individual, local, national, and global identities, cosmopolitanism includes citizenship/civic education and a commitment to act towards addressing the challenges that threaten social justice in local communities and national, regional, and global society (Banks, 2008; Falk, 2002). Falk (2002) describes this type of cosmopolitanism as "cosmopolitan democracy". It aims to balance national and global political and economic agendas toward individual and societal wellbeing. "If global economic governance structures are reoriented to express a kind of equilibrium between market-oriented (globalization-from-above) and people-oriented (globalization-from-below), then it is possible that political space will be recreated to

enable the reemergence of the humane state” ( p. 59). This approach to education addresses civic education to the extent of developing students’ civic efficacy and responsibility to individuals, their community, nation, and global society.

### **Cosmopolitanism and Education**

Two goals of social studies education are to promote social understanding and civic efficacy (Parker, 2012). Taking into account the diverse experiences of students can contribute to a more global understanding and sense of responsibility for our global society, nation, and local communities. For example, many schools in the United States have a diverse student body representing numerous countries and a plethora of cultural identities. Providing students the opportunity to share and learn from each other implements a cosmopolitan approach, consistent with the goals and standards of the social science disciplines and curriculum. Moreover, this approach taps into students’ funds of knowledge enabling them to share their knowledge and experiences with their peers.

Social studies curriculum and teachers should address social issues found in our communities, especially if teachers aim to make the curriculum meaningful to their students. One way of making the curriculum meaningful to students is to include, celebrate, and learn from the diversity of students in the classroom. Social studies teachers should provide students with experiences and material that help them tap into their funds of knowledge that develops their social understanding and civic efficacy (Banks, 2002; Parker, 2012). This includes acknowledging different ethnic, social-class, and language groups, providing opportunities to expose students to diversity, to deliberate and collaborate with others to address or act on social challenges, and to question how and what we know.

An educational program that includes various ways of learning and knowing is the Theory of Knowledge course included in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. Hansen’s (2010) approach to cosmopolitanism suggests that education should encourage people to engage in the larger world, to be receptive and reflective to new ideas and ways of knowing in order to enhance the “integrity of the local”. Theory of Knowledge aims to provide students and teachers an opportunity to reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing by reflecting on their own culture, the culture of others in the world, and on disciplines of knowledge. It also encourages students to become aware of the intricacy of knowledge. The aim of Theory of Knowledge is for students to understand the interpretive nature of knowledge, with personal biases rooted in ideology, even if these biases are pervasive or rejected (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2011). This objective of the IB Diploma Program supports Hansen’s (2010) view of a ground up cosmopolitan education.

Another method of implementing a cosmopolitan education or experience as described by Nussbaum (2002) and Appiah (2002) is to provide students experiences that allow students from different cultures and countries to collaborate with one another, helping them to understand how nations are interdependent. Issues surrounding the environment, spread of disease, climate, and human rights require the collaboration of citizens around the world because these issues know no border and affect multiple nations in our global society. Collaboration addressing these challenges can facilitate a global identity and citizenship that is concerned about challenges around the world that connect to local experiences. Collaboration between and among citizens around the world can be accomplished in a number of manners. One example is through virtual classrooms, such as iEARN or other organized groups that allow students to collaborate with

other students from another country on an issue based social challenge. There are numerous activities and projects (role-playing, identifying personal influences on ethnicity, gender and social class identification, literature/media sources, and action research) that can facilitate students' understanding of social understanding and civic efficacy.

Practicing cosmopolitan democracy may take the form of “transformative citizenship education” (Banks, 2008). It helps students use information and skills to challenge societal issues pertaining to social justice and improving the lives of individuals and groups. Transformative citizenship education can lead to change that ensures the well-being of individuals and society.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

There are many challenges to maintaining a balance between cultural diversity and national unity. Practicing and reflecting on multicultural citizenship, global sensibilities, and cosmopolitanism from early in life can help develop the skills that allow people to be able to make informed decisions about their lives and positively contribute to living in a pluralistic democracy while maintaining their individual identities. Awareness of one's own culture and traditions can help people to understand their own prejudices and biases, and can contribute to learning about and accepting those who practice different cultural traditions and ways of knowing (Hansen, 2010). Despite democratic nations like the United States promoting equality and protection of human rights, there are discrepancies between doctrine and reality. During times of conflict, democratic ideals and human rights are often neglected. For example, the reaction to the attacks of September 11 severely marginalized Arab-Americans because of their ethnic and cultural background. This is similar to the fate of Japanese-Americans during World War II. If a cosmopolitan approach to education were in place, the differences between people may have been better understood, and these divisions may not have been so severe or, perhaps, even created.

The ability to debate and deliberate an issue is a key function in democratic practices. “Deliberating about the demands of justice is a central virtue of democratic citizenship, because it is primarily, though not exclusively, through our empowerment as democratic citizens that we can further the cause of justice around the world” (Gutmann, 2002, p. 69). Practicing social justice has the potential to empower people in local and global capacities. Nussbaum's concern is that it often stops at our national borders. In today's globalized society, individuals must have an awareness of and care for local and global connections that impact their identity, lives, and purpose. An awareness of postcolonial effects on systems today contributes to our ability to understand the structure that influences our lives. Furthermore, including varied perspectives and cultures in education contributes to developing global sensibilities that are essential to enhancing social understanding that allows individuals to interact among and between people and cultures.

Individuals working together in cooperation can uphold democratic ideals, adding importance to addressing global similarities, differences, and issues of social justice in the elementary and secondary school curriculum. Schools can offer appropriate opportunities that tie in with local, state, and national standards to practice identifying, investigating, and problem-solving challenges found in our local and global communities. Opportunities to exchange ideas, experience diverse cultures, and interact with diverse groups of people must be available to students if we are to have a thriving pluralistic democracy.

Social studies education should take a cosmopolitan approach to address the impact of globalization and the movement of people between cultural regions and nations. This movement and exchange of culture impacts individual development of identity leading to multiple identifications affiliated with their home culture, nation and global society. Education that solely focuses on developing national identity, not only neglects the diversity found in our communities, but it also neglects opportunities to promote civic ideals and misses opportunities to learn and improve our society.

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