Are WE the World? A Critical Reflection on Selfhood in U.S. Global Citizenship Education

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Abstract: Although much debate exists on the conceptualization, nature, and goals of global citizenship education, there has been widespread support for incorporating ideals of global citizenship into the practices, texts, and curricula of U.S. schools and universities. In this paper, we offer an interpretive discourse based critique of ideas of selfhood underlying global citizenship education. Based on analysis of two U.S. high school curricula and materials available on websites devoted to global citizenship, the article develops a critique of universalizing constructs of selfhood that underlie global citizenship discourse. These assumptions obscure reflection on dynamics of social class privilege that shape global citizenship activism and situate global citizenship education as a potentially counter-productive neoliberal discourse. The article concludes with recommendations

for practitioners interested in developing a more self-reflective and critical global citizenship education.

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¿Somos NOSOTROS el mundo? Una reflexión crítica sobre la "personalización" y la educación para una ciudadanía global

Resumen: A pesar de que existe mucho debate sobre la conceptualización, naturaleza y metas de la educación para la ciudadanía global, existe un amplio apoyo para la incorporación de ideas de ciudadanía global en prácticas, textos y currículos de escuelas y universidades en los E.E.U.U. Este artículo ofrece una crítica interpretativa basada en discurso de las ideas de personalización (*selfhood*) que subyacen la educación de ciudadanía global, basados en análisis de dos currículos de colegios estadounidenses y materiales disponibles en sitios de web dedicados a la ciudadanía global. Estos supuestos oscurecen la reflexión sobre las dinámicas de privilegio de clase social que subyacen esas nociones sobre ciudadanía global y sitúan la educación ciudadana global como un discurso potencialmente neoliberal contraproducente. Este artículo concluye con recomendaciones para los profesionales interesados en desarrollar una educación ciudadana global que sea más auto-flexiva y critica.
Palabras-clave: educación de ciudadanía global; personalización; reflexión critica; currículo

Somos NOS o mundo? Uma reflexão crítica sobre a "personalização" e educação para a cidadania global

Resumo: Apesar de que existe muito debate sobre a conceptualização, natureza e metas da educação de cidadania global, havia sido apoio amplo para a incorporação das ideais da cidadania global nas práticas, textos y currículos de escolas e faculdades nos E.E.U.U. Este artigo oferece uma crítica interpretativa baseada no discurso das ideias de selfhood que fundamentam a educação de cidadania global. Baseado em análises de dos currículos de colégios americanos y materiais disponíveis em sites de web dedicados à cidadania global, os autores desenvolvem uma crítica de construtos universalizados de selfhood que fundamentam o discurso na cidadania global. Estes pressupostos obscurecem a reflexão nas dinâmicas de privilegio de classe social que formam o ativismo da cidadania global e situam a educação cidadã global como um discurso potencialmente neoliberal contraproducente. Este artigo termina com recomendações para os professionais

interessados em desenvolver uma educação cidadã global que seja mais auto flexiva e
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Introduction

In recent years, global citizenship education has become an increasingly influential idea
around the world. While there is much debate regarding its meaning and implications for educational
practice, many efforts aim to encourage awareness and knowledge of global interconnectivity, foster
a sense of belonging to a shared global community, and encourage student commitments to take
action to address global problems. In the United States in particular, though some scholars note a
continuing parochialism and lack of development in global citizenship education (e.g. Myers, 2006),
interest in global citizenship education has been growing (Dill, 2015). This is evident in the
emergence of partnerships between universities or colleges and local high schools in global
citizenship courses, international or global schools, embedded global academies and programs in
public and private high schools throughout the country, and emergence of organizations devoted to
establishing global partnerships between U.S. elementary and secondary schools and schools in
other countries.

However, despite the growing interest in global citizenship education, there remain
difficulties surrounding conceptualizations of global citizenship itself, connections between theory
and pedagogical practice, and measurement of the effectiveness of educational efforts. Many
scholars have observed that there remain significant tensions between different approaches to global
citizenship education—namely, an entrepreneurial approach that stresses teaching competencies that
students will need for a future global job market and a more social justice approach that aims to
develop socially conscious global citizens who are capable of being change agents to address global
problems in local and global arenas (Dill, 2015; Parker and Camecia, 2009).

An emerging critical literature on global citizenship education [GCE] suggests that often at
the heart of GCE discourse and practice lie implicit cultural and class biases that privilege Western
world-views (Andreotti, 2006; Andreotti and deSousa, 2012; Dill, 2015; Handler, 2013; Hartman &
Kiely, 2014; Jeffress, 2008; 2012). These scholars have suggested that some versions of global
citizenship education are heavily influenced by unexplored cultural, class, and moral/ethical
orientations toward self and others, potentially leading GCE to become another tool for cultural or
class-based global domination.

In this article, we extend this cultural critique of Western bias to consider how some
pedagogical efforts surrounding global citizenship in the U.S. reflect particular cultural and class
based constructions of selfhood. Since global citizenship education is undertaken within specific
national and cultural contexts, it is not "free-floating"—it will inevitably be to some extent localized
within and reflect aspects of both national school cultures as well as broader and deeper dimensions
of culture that shape ideas regarding personhood. We thus believe that global citizenship education,
like all forms of education, both reflects and provides persons with cultural tools (discourses and
activities) to construct themselves as particular kinds of persons at specific moments of cultural
history.

Consequently, while acknowledging the positive goals of fostering of social justice and
belonging within a wider global community, we ask, how does U.S. global citizenship discourse
implicitly construct such belonging in terms of U.S. individualist notions of passions, desires, and
"saving" individual action in relation to others? In reviewing and reflecting on two publicly available
global citizenship curricula and eight supplementary online websites, we argue that global citizenship

discourse is grounded in a universalizing "we" that extends U.S. individualist constructions of self to the rest of the world. This universalizing "we" privileges the personal passions, choices, and agency of the global activist self, permitting individuals to construct the world as a field of their own agency and desire. Despite emphasis on fighting social injustice around the world, pedagogical efforts in the U.S. can reinvent the savior self of the classic "white man's burden" in new, globally-conscious terms. Based on these arguments, we offer pedagogical recommendations to educators for thinking more critically about ideals and their connections to the discourses and practices of global citizenship, particularly at the classroom level.

The Postcolonial Challenge:
Conceptualizing Global Citizens in Theory and Practice

The task of ". . . spreading global consciousness, or the promotion of an ethos of global citizenship within our educational institutions" has been ongoing for quite some time (Pike, 2008, p. 226-227). As schools are always part of global networks and flows of information, goods, and people (Urry, 2000), educators have taken up the task of educating "future leaders" and "agents of change."[1] As change agents, global citizens require new skill-sets such intercultural competency, cross-cultural communication skills, collaborative abilities, critical thinking, and leadership skills, since learners are now citizens of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1996) that transcends national boundaries. For advocates of GCE, global citizens identify with this community and should be prepared to take leadership roles within it (Israel, 2013; Casap, 2015).

Beyond global skill sets and competencies, Pashby (2011) identifies social justice as key orientation in conceptualizing the "citizen-subjectivity" in global citizenship. Such an orientation requires global citizens to extend "an individual's awareness, loyalty, and allegiance beyond the borders of a nation to encompass the whole of humankind." (Pike, 2008, p. 225). Along the same line, drawing on Nussbaum's notion of narrative imagination, Golmohamad (2004) promotes a thick notion of global citizen identity, and argues that a "thick citizen" engages the global on local, national and international levels. Thus, beyond having awareness and knowledge, global citizens should be able to "act on behalf of humanities everywhere" (Adam & Cafagna, 2006, p. 123), becoming social change agents who identify with a nascent set of global values and practices and who work for the common good.

Yet, some scholars working from a critical postcolonial perspective have suggested that the cosmopolitan orientation beneath global citizenship requires problematization. Bowden (2003) traces the history of the term "global citizen" and locates its roots in the West's "overzealous civilizing-cum-universalizing mission in the non-Western world" (p. 350). He argues that the tasks of the "global citizen" might reflect the European colonizing mission. Writing from a sociological perspective, Marshall (2011) points out that promoting education for a particular "type of active and impassioned global citizenship and social change in fact advocates an instrumentalist, 'cosmopolitan capital model.' " (p. 418)

Considering the difficulties that exist at a conceptual level regarding global citizen subjectivity, it is not surprising that translation of such ideas into educational practices then becomes difficult. For instance, Battistone et al (2009) question the limit of what direct instruction, supervised

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[1] Citizenship is thus equated with social practices, dependent upon actions and outlooks adopted voluntarily upon individuals and groups, rather than as contingent upon any sort of formal legal standing that would be analogous to national citizenship. Global citizenship is founded on the principles of universal obligation: it may recognize the advantages of national political structures, yet its main aim is to foster global change.

research, and global simulations can teach to students about global trends and issues. The assumed subject in mainstream GCE discourse is a "particular college student with particular tradition to acknowledge and critique." (Pashby, 2011, p. 435) Proposing and recontextualizing the universalist ideas of social justice in schools can be problematic because the ideals are those of the adult, but not of the child (Roth, 2007). Further, educational programs designed to teach global studies in the U.S. are often undermined by a persistent emphasis on local, domestic themes, as Myers (2006) has shown.

Similarly, in an empirical analysis of 10 school programs promoting global citizenship in the U.S., Dill (2015, p.5) observes how global citizenship education in its current forms reflects the hallowed Western self of the "autonomous individual," an individualism that can in the end erode its moral ambitions of a more socially conscious and just world. According to Dill, global citizenship education reflects merely another chapter in a long history of American education that "…makes the individual and his or her autonomous choices the only legitimate category for identity and for understanding difference" (p. 86).

For other scholars, activist ideas of working for social justice for others ironically express participants' self-centeredness. Andreotti (2006) observes that youth involved in global activism campaigns uncritically pursue "training as activists" through self-centered motivations, with goals related to "self-improvement, development of leadership skills, or simply having fun, enhanced, of course, by the moral supremacy and vanguardist feeling of being responsible for changing or saving the world 'out-there.'" (p. 40). Students seek to "gain status back home" in participating in international service-learning trips (Snee, 2014, p. 85), with some observers noting that GCE activities benefit the volunteers more rather than the local community (Cocorantan and Handler, 2013; Holdesworth and Quinn, 2011).

Handler (2013) summarizes the postcolonial challenge to the conceptualization of "global citizens" well. In considering the case of the US, he observes that students participating in a university global development studies major bring a particular perspective to their global activism: that is, they do not actually see themselves as positioned in relation to the world. Put another way, their visions of themselves as global actors are obscured by their relative cultural and class positions:

> . . . students think the world is their oyster. Such a view of reality is consonant with their inability to conceptualize their own social location, or, phrased positively, their belief that their political position is grounded in a universal morality. (It is also consonant with their socioeconomic privilege (p. 189).

In other words, critical postcolonial scholars challenge the taken-for-granted cosmopolitanism implicated in "global citizens." For them, not realizing the limitations of the cosmopolitan orientation risks coopting GCE as another form of Western values imposition on non-Western worlds. In light of such postcolonial challenges, scholars have advocated for an "epistemological shift" that recognizes the tentative nature of knowledge within global citizenship education. This means that knowledge is always relational and historically situated, and that learning should begin by recognizing and being reflexive about one's own epistemic assumptions (Marshall, 2009).[2] Developing a similar theme, Andreotti (2006) and Rizvi (2009) emphasize on the need for students to reflect upon their own situatedness, their own perspectives, their own critical and political

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[2] It also urges educators to make the distinction between "global-minded citizen" and global citizen. A globally-minded citizen "thinks globally and acts locally," as it helps "one and all to appreciate that people and cultures different to one's own are not something to be ridiculed or looked down upon as inferior or somehow backward and in need of Western tutelage." (Bowden, 2003, p. 239).

presuppositions, and upon the way they create knowledge about "others" and use this knowledge as they engage with them. We stand with these scholars in advocating a postcolonial global citizenship education grounded on self-reflexive and self-critical epistemologies that deconstruct universalist assumptions and open a space imagination of alternative ways of being and engaging with the world.

Methodological Approach: Self in the "Figured World" of Global Citizenship

What these studies suggest is a need for closer analysis of the ways in which the global citizen self is constructed in U.S. pedagogical discourse. Our approach draws on recent anthropological work on selfhood that sees self as constituted through cultural discourse and practice within specific "figured worlds" (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998; Urrieta, 2007). We argue that global citizenship is a "figured world" that functions as a context of meaning for self-making, in that it makes particular discourses, narratives, and practices available to participants as tools for constructing selves along particular lines. In this regard, the figured world of global citizenship embraces a shifting and always emergent frontier for self-making, while at the same time being constrained by localized ideas and values concerning what kinds of selves are possible and valued in society (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996).

Our approach can best be called "critical reflection." This is not a methodology *per se*, but an approach to seeing the world that prioritizes analyzing, reconsidering and questioning experiences within a broad context of issues (Murray & Kujundzic, 2005). According to Brookfield (1988), critical reflection involves contextual awareness (awareness of how particular phenomena are situated within and reflective of the larger context in which they are found), imaginative speculation (alternate ways of thinking about phenomena in order to provide an opportunity to challenge our prevailing ways of knowing and acting) and reflective skepticism (which involves questioning universal truth claims or unexamined patterns within the phenomenon under consideration). These activities are "critical" because they inquire into unobserved, unacknowledged, or taken for granted aspects of a given phenomenon, in order to develop re-conceptualizations that challenge existing ideas.

We undertook this task of critical reflection on ideas underlying global citizenship education through an interpretive analysis of two U.S. high-school level global citizenship curricula, drawing our illustrations from textual materials available online for 10 course topics related to global citizenship during the academic year 2013-2014.[3] These topics included identity, diversity and equity, human rights, and world issues, among others. Materials included lesson plans and descriptions, lesson activity descriptions and handouts, and student blog posts. These curricular materials were chosen because they were among the very few that were available in the public domain. [4] However, since global citizenship curricula are situated within a wider discursive context of ideas and practices regarding global citizenship, we also included illustrations from eight websites promoting global citizenship. While curricula are clearly pedagogical in nature, we also argue that websites are also pedagogical, in that they attempt to "teach" readers what key issues are, raise awareness, and invite action--often along very similar lines as school based curricula. These websites

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[3] In order to protect the interests of individuals involved, we do not identify the names of schools or particular programs. Websites for organizations, however, are identified as necessary when material from their sites is quoted.

[4] Global citizenship curricula, as we discovered in the course of this project, are largely proprietary; that is, they are either "for purchase" or developed for use in particular courses or schools and not made available publicly. This fact limited our access to such curricula.

were purposefully selected because they featured discourses that reflected ideas about global citizen selfhood.

We systematically read through approximately 60 pages of online materials. Since our focus was on ideas about the self, we read through the online materials and noted passages that concerned the self. We then developed three themes related to selfhood that appeared with some degree of consistency in the texts available to us, using representative texts from the curricula and websites to illustrate theses themes. We did not treat such materials as representative of the entire corpus of global citizenship curricula, nor did we conduct actual observations or interviews to verify how such constructs were delivered in practice.

We consider textual discourse as one important dimension of culturally figured worlds (Cherryholmes, 1988; Hall, 1986; Skinner, Valsiner, and Holland, 2001). Obviously, as with all interpretative critiques, textual examples are used as windows into the larger conceptual world that informs a given discourse. Clearly, these two curricula may not be representative of other global citizenship courses or curricula in the U.S; we do not claim that they are. Our purpose is simply to offer a critical reading that can suggest meanings that *may* be relevant for understanding the larger discourse on global citizenship education in the US.

Framing the Global Citizen: The Universal WE

A prominent theme underlying the curricular material is the "universal we." It appears with great frequency in the global citizenship curricular discourse and in websites promoting global citizenship. For instance, teachers are encouraged to ask students questions such as, "If WE buy t-shirts made by child laborers does this make us responsible for taking action to combat the abuses created by these global issues? If WE do assume this responsibility, WE need to figure out how WE can take action and make others care about these issues?" "How do WE make a high school student in [our community] care about the plight of a child miner in Ghana?" [GC 1] Global citizenship is defined as "…[is about] seeing the world's greatest challenges as OUR challenges and asking what WE can do about it." (GCC 2) [emphasis added]. It is a "community of people like YOU. People who want to learn about and take action on the world's biggest challenges—and use their power to get other people involved too. (website, www.globalcitizen.org , 5/31/15)." Collectively, "WE can end extreme poverty." (www.globalcitizen.org/introduction, 2/18/14)

Who is this "WE"? As reflected in the quotes above, the global citizen "we" has three primary dimensions. First, it reflects an imagined solidarity with others—a sense of belonging ". . . to a community of people like you" who are fundamentally alike in their beliefs and values. This *we* erases conflict, inequality, or difference. Second, the global citizen "we" is eminently defined by its agency: its power to take action. Taking action proceeds directly from assumed solidarity with others. Third, the global citizen "we" is missionary: it is assumed to have power and privilege to *make others care* about the things it cares about.

While the global citizen "we" evokes the ideals of solidarity with others through shared commitment to social action, it also obscures the fact that this exercise of "we-ness" occurs in a space defined apart from engagement with the realities of difference on the ground. In a deep sense, the global citizen *we* is defined *a priori* as without conflict; that is, in its abstraction it is shielded from the reality of profound cultural differences, of the rights of others to their differences, and their rights to define their problems and the solutions to those problems on their own terms. This *we* attains its elevated and protected status because its values are defined at such a high level of abstraction that it is assumed no one can disagree. For example, one prominent advocate of the construct of global citizenship writes:

The values being proposed for the world community are not esoteric and obscure. They are the values that world leaders have been advocating for the past 100 years. They include human rights, religious pluralism, gender equity, the rule of law, environmental protection, sustainable worldwide economic growth, poverty alleviation, prevention and cessation of conflicts between countries, elimination of weapons of mass destruction, humanitarian assistance, and preservation of cultural diversity (Israel, 2013).

This discourse obscures the important ways these ideas are not all agreed upon or understood in the same way by people everywhere.[5] By representing these principles as fundamental values of the global citizen, they are removed from debate or conflict, positioning the global "we" to take action in a field of assumed solidarity. No space is made for the possibility that others don't need or want "our" intervention. The global "we" is thus simultaneously a tool for the self-empowerment of the global citizen and a potential tool for oppression, as it assumes the rights of the global citizen-agent to engage in righting the (supposed) wrongs of others' lives, based on (supposed) shared values.

In the curricula explored, the global *we* masks a basic conceptual difficulty with the idea of what is means to share values or share problems. Certainly purchasers of sweatshop goods--or broccoli, for that matter-- in the US are implicated in Bangladeshi workers' or Guatemalan broccoli farmers' life aspirations and troubles.[6] But to jump from recognizing global consumer chains to claims that "their problems are OUR problems" is to subsume others' lives into the value set and world view of the self as global citizen. In fact, there is little justification for assuming that others in distant places even agree on what is a problem, let alone conceptualize it in the same way or see it as "shared." Such a view dramatically oversimplifies the cultural and social realities of others' lives.

Another difficulty with the take action/make others care idea is the way in which it re-inscribes insiders (who care and who have the capacity to take action) and outsiders (who don't). The selves of global citizens are specifically constituted by their capacity to "make a better world," failing to recognize, as Jeffress (2008) argues, ". . . the conditions of privilege that allow some to be in the position to help or 'make a difference.'" (p. 28). The call to "make others care" about issues the global self defines as important is another reflection of a certain missionary mind-set, as it evokes the unquestioned inherent moral superiority of the global self as a leader who converts the unconverted to global activism on behalf of the oppressed other.

The Ironic Emphasis on "Self" within Ostensibly "Global Issues"

A persistent emphasis on activities that promote a focus on the self was perhaps the most ironic thread in the GC curricula we explored. Activities often engaged students in discussion of their own identities, opinions or dreams, or asked students to relate things they were learning to their own lives.

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[5] Even supposedly fundamental notions such as human rights don't move well across cultures. As Pitarch's (2008) work demonstrates, when back translating the Mayan translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to English, the whole text becomes unreadable. Even the most skillful translator and cannot find a cultural equivalent to fundamental terms of "rights" and "law" in Tzeltal language, since these concepts embody notions about relations among humans, animals, and the spirit of God.

[6] Broccoli is unlikely to make it into the list of actionable global problems that WE care about, because broccoli just doesn't have the ability to inspire moral indignation, unlike sweatshops and child laborers.

For example, in the first curriculum, students discussed how they "started by exploring *our opinions* through an interactive anticipation guide," and "discussed what a sustainable future could look like, *in our local community and in the world* as a whole" and "explored what the word 'sustainability' meant to *us*" (GCC 1, emphasis added.) Ironically, within this ostensibly "global" curriculum, there was no discussion of what sustainability meant to other people in other parts of the world, or what others' opinions were on the topic; instead, all of the focus was on the students' own individual views and opinions.

In a unit on identity in a global context, the focus again was on the students' own identities, rather than on how others in other parts of the world might approach the idea. For example, one activity "create an identity chart that describes pieces of *their ascribed identity* and *their personal identity* using the worksheet that has been created" (GCC 1, emphasis added). Similarly, in the second curriculum, classroom activities include creating "three *self portrait* stencils," including one that incorporated the poem students wrote in a workshop entitled 'My American Dream'" (GCC 2, emphasis added). According to the curriculum author, "these poems speak of the challenges *they* have faced in *their* lives, as well as *their* hopes for the future" (GCC 2, emphasis added).

In another activity, students participated in a workshop on cultural diffusion, and ". . . reflected on how cultural diffusion had affected their *own lives* (GCC 2, emphasis added). The guiding questions of reflective journals in this curriculum include questions such as, "What do I already know or think I know about this global issue? How do I feel about it? How have I come to know and feel these things? What am I interested in finding out? How can I find out? How does this issue relate to my life or my community?" (GCC 2). A teacher writes in reflective blog post, "Over the course of the school year, university and high school students work together to explore *their own* ideas about social justice issues such as racism, inequality, and to develop ideas and action projects for how *we* can work locally to support a more fair and society." (Vasquez, 2013, emphasis added). As is evident, the emphasis is on the students' own selves, their own ideas, values, and dreams--not on understanding the values, dreams and ideas of others in distant nations or communities. The latter are invisible within the self-focused narratives of global citizenship in these curricula. One might reasonably ask, shouldn't a truly globally aware citizenship education move students away from a focus on themselves and their own identities, perspectives, and experiences to a greater focus on understanding the lives and world-views of others around the world? Why not have students explore what identity means to *other* people, or what sustainability means to *other* people in other parts of the world? It is certainly true that students are encouraged to do research on issues that they care about; but even this research is always brought back to its relevance to the students' own life or community (as reflected in the quote above)—as if it had no value or relevance unless seen in relation to self. The self-centrism of these activities perhaps reflects the extent to which the global citizen *we* is an ethnocentric projection that subsumes others into its own self-interests.

The Desiring Self: Global Citizenship as [Universalizing] *Desire*

A second prominent theme in the global citizenship discourse is an emphasis on *desire*. Global citizenship appears to be centered on the pursuit of the global citizen's own passions and desires, even as these are ostensibly dedicated to the welfare of others. There is a striking lack of consideration of others' desires or even a recognition of the fact that others have desires. Instead, the global citizen's desire is naturalized and de-politicized, effectively abstracted from its position of privilege.

In curricula, this politics of desire is potently manifest in a persistent emphasis on the student's discovery of personal passions through global engagements or involvements. Deciding on

one's passions and acting on them appeared to be central to the self-constructs of global citizens. For example, one activity was focused simply on having students comment on the question, "What I love." One student's response was: "I love to help people. I love helping people because it makes me feel good. Helping people is one of our civic responsibilities in my opinion. When I volunteer for soup kitchens, I get the joy of serving a warm meal to hungry mouths. I love helping people in need. The smile or small grin warms my heart and that's why I love to volunteer" (GCC 1). The student loves to help because *it makes her feel good.* The focus is on her own feelings. In other examples, the emphasis is on pursuit of global issues that are *a priori* defined as personally relevant or meaningful, bringing the focus entirely on the self and its own concerns, rather than on understanding how they might actually move beyond themselves to consider others' desires or concerns. For example, in an activity aiming at explaining "what is global citizenship," students are to "select a global issue that is *personally relevant and meaningful* to them" (GCC 2). At the end of the class, students will "reflect about global citizenship in their personal lives, [asking] *How am I a global citizen? How can I be a better global citizen?*" (GCC 2). Students will "write policy briefs to impact an issue that YOU [they] deeply care about (GCC 1, emphasis in original)" and "explore the relationship between human rights and social justice through engaging with issues that are *important to them* (GCC 1, emphasis added).

This self-desires and self-fulfillment of the global citizen are amply reflected in websites devoted to global citizenship programs and projects, where global citizens are often said to be finding or following their passions. As a matter of fact, all the short bios of staff affiliated with a global social entrepreneurship organization describe their global engagement through a lens of desire/passion. For instance, Kate is "passionate about finding simple yet effective solutions to complex problems." Sam, a Field Rep, "found her passions collide" when working as a Field Rep in SAHA Global, while Kathryn "served as a Field Rep to … where she grew her passion for human-centered design." (SAHA Global, [http://sahaglobal.org/what-we-do/our-approach/)](http://sahaglobal.org/what-we-do/our-approach/). The organization looks for "students and young professionals who are passionate about environmental sustainability, public health and international social justice. (SAHA Global, [http://sahaglobal.org/opportunities-abroad/program-details/)](http://sahaglobal.org/opportunities-abroad/program-details/). Scholars in Global Citizens Youth Summit "take action and follow their *passion* in taking on complex global problems in their local communities (Global Citizens Youth Summit, [http://globalci.org/gc-summit/, emphasis added)](http://globalci.org/gc-summit/). Similarly, in Global Citizens Network, "everyone … is passionate about promoting GCN's core values and vision." Globalcitizen.org is "a place where passionate people can take action and grow the movement to end extreme poverty" ([https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/highlights-from-the-2015-gates-letter/).](https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/highlights-from-the-2015-gates-letter/) "Passion" becomes a keyword in describing "global citizens."

There is nothing wrong with having students who are passionate about things and who want to pursue their passions. However, the difficulty is the manner in which this emphasis on the global citizen's pursuit of passions occurs in the absence of any equivalent recognition of the passions of people who are positioned as the beneficiaries of global action. There is no parallel discourse about the passions of the poor, the abused, the suffering "others" who constitute the objects of rescue or assistance. Those others don't even seem to have passions; instead, they are constructed as empty receivers of passionate action by the global citizen. In effect, this discourse reifies passions as goods in themselves, and celebrates them as evidence of the global citizens' commitments and capacities. In sum, more than their effects on others, passions reflect on the individual student's state of self-development *as* a global citizen.

Finally, there is the question of whether this motivational discourse of desire is shared by others in target communities. Some studies illustrate the great gulf that exists between the language of global citizenship as conceived in Western countries and that of local communities in the developing world. In the case of Ghana, Samra writes:

> The language of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship itself, as conceived in the West, proved to be inaccessible to those that live in the developing world and have very different priorities. There existed clear disparities between the motivations and meaning of the project of those delivering it in Ghana who saw it as a window of opportunity for development, and to the decision makers from above, who saw it as an opportunity to exercise advantageous resources in our globalized world to learn more about others (2007, p. 1)

Although little research as yet exists on the perceptions of the beneficiaries of global citizenship projects, a more authentic and critical approach to global citizenship would highlight the potential for great differences in understanding between global citizens and those on the receiving end of their activity.[7]

The Activist Self: Self-transformation and the Erasure of Positionality

The celebration of desire in the global citizen self raises the question: just what is being desired? Although helping the world, making an impact, or "giving back" are all featured prominently, these actions occur in the context of self-focused narratives where the overarching reference point is the global citizen's self-fulfillment or self-transformation. Changing others' lives becomes the global citizens' own medium for self-construction.

These themes are particularly highlighted in student reflections on gap years, internship and volunteering placements abroad, and participation in global citizen service travel, where ambitious global citizens encounter "authentic" local culture and "build relationships" while doing good in local communities. For example, cross-culturalsolutions.org describes volunteering trips as follows,

> Volunteer Abroad. Change Their World. Change Yours. This Changes Everything.
>
> We're making volunteering a safe exciting adventure of a lifetime. Imagine a life changing adventure that will take you off the usual tourist path. Wake up to the sound of roosters crowing in the distance. Find local children waiting patiently at your gate to hold your hand as they walk to school . . . Volunteer with [us] and you will experience this and so much more! (www.cross-culturalsolutions.org)

On another website, the volunteer self-transformation becomes the most important reason in building a Global Citizen Network:

> [Barb's] work is the reason that we are passionate about what we do at Global Citizens Network. It is all about building relationships with people a world away from ours and allowing that experience to change you. Looking at her photos and reading her descriptions, it is clear that Barb came home with a deep respect and love for the people of Chiang Rai, Thailand. How rewarding! ([https://www.globalcitizens.org/blog/bringing-it-home-thailand)](https://www.globalcitizens.org/blog/bringing-it-home-thailand)

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[7] Otherwise, the nationalist binary oppositions reinforce the division between the so-called "international" and "national" spaces, creating the possibility for particular national spaces to function as legitimated hidden norms (Roman, 2004, p. 242)

The biggest rewards from engaging in such programs are experiences of self-transformation: of learning to appreciate life like the locals, for example, or learning lessons about oneself, and the pleasures of feeling good about oneself helping others "in need." The ends of such work from the perspective of the local community are rarely addressed, being as they are already subsumed within a far more obvious emphasis on the good feelings that a GC volunteer will get out of the experience.[8]

Moreover, on some sites, volunteers earn points and rewards through doing the work of global citizens. In the words of Sarah, a self-identified global citizen:

> By signing up to become a Global Citizen, and then reading articles, watching videos, signing petitions, and sharing content, you can earn points (rewards) to use towards prize drawings for concert tickets! And what really appealed to me the most, was that by doing all of this, you were actually taking part in ending global poverty. From issues such as clean water, woman and children, health, and feeding the hungry, just knowing about these issues, and taking action, really made me feel like I had a calling to help out others, and change the world. So I continued to use it more frequently. I still do actually. I love catching up on current issues surrounding the subject of poverty. There are so many little things I can do that I never knew about before, that could really make an impact. It's fun, educational, motivating and rewarding—all at the same time! . . . It all started with a simple tweet! And hey, the rewards are great! I think a simple thing such as that can go a long way. That's why I love being a Global Citizen. (www.globalpovertyproject.com).[9]

The writer "loves catching up on issues related to poverty" and clearly enjoys the sensations she gets from making an impact; for her, global citizenship is all about the reward. As such, the existence of poverty, and the pleasure-giving illusion of fixing it, becomes a commodity itself, a thing to be bought and sold.

This self-focus within activism for social good has been observed by other scholars exploring volunteer tourism. Butcher and Smith (2010), for example, observe a "life politics" at work, in which the search for selfhood via morally elevated forms of consumption and travel is primary:

> . . . many volunteer tourists seek to affect change as a part of a self-conscious shaping of their own identity: their own sense of self. The trip can be a prominent part of a person's 'biography' in this respect. . . The narrative is that of the individual rather than of the society visited. (p. 31).

A similar point is made by Lyons et al. (2012), who argue that global volunteer travel has been increasingly co-opted by a neoliberal agenda that fails to address issues of Western privilege, and in so doing perpetuates the binaries of "us" and "them" associated with colonialism. In other words, global citizen's volunteering activities become another tool for capitalist exploration by the privileged youths.

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[8] As Handler (2013) notes, global studies majors at UVA often talk about "giving back" to communities without any clear object in mind; he asks, giving back what? To whom?

[9] What is more troubling is that such initiatives have fueled an industry of packaged volunteer travel. In exchange for sometimes rather hefty program fees, ambitious "global citizens," mostly high school graduates and college students, can find "authentic" culture and identities through purchasing a packaged tour.

The Global Citizen and the White (Wo)Man's Burden: An Encore

The global citizenship discourse described thus far appears dominated by an underlying focus on the self-development and self-orientations of the global citizen, as they are conceptualized through the morally elevated status of a global *we.* Ironically, however, as Handler (2013) and others have noted, there is at the same time little encouragement toward self-reflection on the cultural and class based privileges that allow one to conduct research, make consumer choices, make monetary donations, participate in fundraising campaigns, and develop action plans - let alone engage in the making of identity boxes. While global citizens are supposed to be aware of global interconnections, a pedagogy that emphasizes individualist themes of personal choice and desire obscures an equally important need for critical attention to social privilege in this process. In this way, the social activist self of the global citizen can hide its positionality behind discourses of universalism and attain a kind of moral immunity.[10]

The question then becomes, what are we really teaching students when we encourage them to advance the "common good" as global citizens? The themes and narratives discussed above cannot be separated from the larger contemporary social and economic context. Scholars find economic-instrumentalist agendas behind actions for social justice (Marshall, 2009; also see Urciouoli, 2003). Whitehead (2005) argues that global citizenship curricula "sell social advantage" in the guise of promoting social justice. Placing global citizenship discourses in this context reveals the hegemony of assumptions centered on the modern, individualist self of the global capitalist system, where self-making itself, particularly through the pursuit of self's own desires and pleasures, is a paramount value. Such selves are driven by an ethos of consumption, where even poverty becomes a consumable, transformed into ticket purchases, campaign contributions, and website visits. Global citizens can "identify" with the world because that world is in fact an extension of their own subjectivities (c.f. Bodwen, 2003; Handler, 2013).

Educational efforts to promote global citizenship discussed here have emerged under conditions of unique privilege—among those with relative wealth, access to education, and political security. These forms of global citizenship education allow service-minded students and philanthropists to address global human problems without ever having to confront their own position of relative economic and political privilege (c.f. Dill, 2015; Handler, 2013). The true meaning behind the "global" in the such discourse can thus be said to reflect the structure of U.S. classed culture: global citizens can and should construct the world as a field of their agency. They assume the right to travel unhindered, to intervene in the lives of others elsewhere, and in this process to construct their own versions of valued selves.

In making the "global citizen" self a new identity available to students, youth, and many others, it appears that global citizenship discourse is powerfully transforming the landscape of global social action. The question is, is it doing so in the way it intends to? Or is it just old wine in new bottles, reasserting the unexamined hegemony of those who have always had the power to define what is normal and good for everyone else?

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[10] At its worst, such arrogance facilitates the reduction of major social problems to simplistic statements about values (our "universal" values) as in this claim about global poverty: "Global poverty is big and complex, but at its root it's about FREEDOM" (GlobalPovertyProject.org).

Conclusion: Some Ways Forward

What are the implications of this critique for improved educational practice? On the one hand, global educators as well as educators in other fields might argue that encouraging student passions and making learning consonant with student interests and aspirations is normal and natural no matter what students may be studying, simply because such self-connections are intrinsically motivating for students. This is certainly true. However, connecting curricular content to students' passions and choices becomes problematic when those passions/choices are used to intervene in and shape others' lives, especially in ways that valorize and naturalize the student's own fundamental values and visions of the good life. This has always been the problematic side of discourses of desire, because they obscure their own universalizing motives.

To consider ways of moving forward with global citizenship education in the United States would require some careful reflection on the ways these "hidden" aspects of self inform pedagogical efforts. Contextualizing global citizenship as a movement itself would be one good starting place, as it would encourage ongoing critical reflection on its connections to political and economic systems in the U.S. and around the world. This would also help to overcome some of the oft-noted parochialism that still informs global education in the US.

Further, alternative models of globality ought to be at the center of global education efforts. As Keane (1998) argues, in considering constructions of global health, different implicit understandings of the world order privilege individualist, communitarian, and social systems perspectives on the global, with real consequences for education and social action. For students and educators particularly in the US, this would be one way to create a space for critical reflection on the assumptions about self and other that, as we have suggested, may underlie some global education efforts. Anthropological case studies, readings, and research that focus on the diverse ways human beings approach their problems and attempt to solve them, alongside work that considers global and transnational movements of people and ideas can be made central to these efforts.

While recognizing that student interests and passions necessarily have a place in education, and in a more authentic global education, these passions would be harnessed toward deep understanding about how others view their own worlds and an understanding of the complexities of social action for social change rather than toward facile extension of students' own subjective values and meanings as platforms for social activism. To create and support a genuinely postcolonial global citizenship, it is imperative to question the centrality of global desires and constructions of universal values and selfhood that may underlie and potentially undermine even our best efforts at promoting global citizenship knowledge and activism. Students and others who have the means to address global problems also need the means to question their own positionality and their constructions of "the other" they so passionately hope to help. As a great deal of anthropological work has pointed out, even the best efforts at promoting human rights or social justice can upset or interfere in undesirable ways with the complex ecologies of relationships and resources that already exist in communities. Global citizenship education must give students deep knowledge of local cultural settings and the ability to put self-critical practice at the core of their activist engagements. It is simply not true that the whole world desires the same things. The potentially destructive interventions of uninformed activist efforts to solve global social problems based on "shared values" is antithetical to a genuinely global citizenship.

As educational anthropologists concerned with international education, we recognize that the globalized human condition presents educators with both opportunities and challenges. The reflections here are offered in the spirit of a contribution toward continuing dialogue among researchers, educators and students on the nature of what it means to learn in and about the world,

and to effect positive change. The rise of global citizenship education offers unparalleled new opportunities to revisit some of the foundational ideas that continue to shape identity and social action in global arenas.

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