Rethinking the Social Studies Curriculum in the Context of Globalization: Education for Global Citizenship in the US

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Abstract:

Scholarship on globalization suggests that new forms of democratic citizenship and politics are emerging, yet the US educational system remains resistant to global perspectives in the curriculum and continues to favors national identity and patriotism over learning about the world. A national approach to citizenship, which is the norm in US social studies classrooms, is unable to explain the complexity of global issues and their impact on students’ lives. The argument is made that a new orientation to social studies education is necessary in order to understand and address the effects of globalization. Two exemplary programs that teach about the world illustrate some of the problems and issues with global perspectives specific to the US educational context. These cases indicate that, while there is a strong base for global studies, significant aspects of globalization are overlooked in the social studies curriculum.

Introduction

The term “global citizenship education” does not comprise a coherent and identifiable area of educational theory or practice in the US. It is often heard that today we¹ are all “global citizens” but in educational circles there is little understanding of either what this means or of the implications for educational practice. In fact, the term appears infrequently in the US educational literature, although it has become part of the educational vocabulary in several European nations (e.g. England) and among international non-governmental organizations (Brownlie, 2001; Delanty, 2000; Ibrahim, 2005; O’Brien & Parry, 2002; OXFAM, 1997; Pike, 2000). When the term appears, it is often used with similar meanings to those ascribed to global education or multicultural education² (e.g. Banks, 2003; Noddings, 2005) and rarely defined and given a coherent theoretical foundation. In this article, I attempt to go beyond the rhetorical use of “global
citizenship” by first defining the concept in relation to curricular approaches to teaching about the world and then using it as a frame for analyzing the educational practices of two case studies. I contend that the concept of “global citizenship education” is a more accurate curricular frame for orienting social studies education because it accounts for the changing nature of citizenship in the context of globalization.

Globalization is the key reason that global citizenship is a more viable concept today than it has ever been (Heater, 2002). A number of scholars support the need for some form of global governance in order to address problems that are beyond the control of the nation state (Archibugi & Held, 1995; Held, 2002). The supranational character of globalization, particularly the development of world markets and multinational corporations, is weakening the sovereignty of the nation state over economic and political matters (Torres, 2002). The inability of nations to solve problems such as environmental degradation, migration, ethnic genocide, and poverty are also a sign that new forms of governance are needed. While not all scholars agree that we have reached the “end of the nation state” (Ohmae, 1995), its changing role suggests favorable conditions for the emergence of global dimensions to democratic governance and citizenship (Heater, 2000; Held, 2002).

The notion of the “global,” however, is particularly paradoxical in the US. Much of the world considers globalization as synonymous for “Americanization” and an instrument of US hegemony (Chua, 2004). Many fear that globalization is overwhelming local cultures through the spread of homogenous popular culture (Barber, 1996). At the same time, within the US, there are conservative fears that cultural pluralism is causing
us to lose our national identity and the “American way of life,” and that regional free-trade pacts are eliminating local jobs (Legrain, 2002).

Discussing the role of education in developing citizenship puts schools in the midst of conflict over social and institutional values. To propose that the educational system should develop global as well as national citizens is controversial, at least superficially, because it appears to undermine patriotism to the nation state. This is especially controversial in the US where, in comparison with the educational practices of many other nations, schooling disproportionately favors national identity over learning about the world (Sir John Daniel, quoted in Perkins-Gough, Lindfors & Ernst, 2002; Nash, 2005). Research by the Pew Research Center (2003) provides further evidence of the strength of nationalism in the US. Its survey, “Views of a Changing World,” found that among wealthy nations the US had the highest proportion of the population who believed that “our culture is superior to others.” As well, a majority in the US favored national sovereignty over international authority in the areas of the environment and International Criminal Courts, in contrast with Europeans who generally supported international authority.

Schools are alternately accused of undermining patriotism when they allow critical discussion of government policy and of narrow ethnocentrism when they neglect the critical examination of global issues. Yet engagement with the world is becoming unavoidable for citizens in all walks of life. Barber (2002) argued that in order to make the inevitable transition from national “independence” to world “interdependence,” a process instigated by globalization, civic education should pay greater attention to learning about the world, other cultures, and other languages. Beyond this argument,
there is also a pressing moral reason for schools to consider global citizenship as a concept for re-envisioning engagement with the world. At question is whether learning about the world will develop into a sustainable pedagogical project aiming to improve society or if it will continue as temporary impositions on schools following US foreign policy and the tide of world events.

In the sections that follow, I first discuss three broad approaches to teaching about the world, drawing on US and international perspectives. I outline in depth the world system approach because it is particularly relevant for the two case studies. Because culture and the broader political, educational, and social contexts influence formal schooling, I next consider some of the unique contextual factors that have shaped these approaches in the US, outlining the development of global education since the 1960s. Then, building on the globalization literature, I develop the concept of global citizenship education based on the implications of the changing nature of citizenship and the role of the state for social studies education. I employ this concept to guide the analysis of two exemplary cases: Northeast International High School and the Midwest Program. Lastly, I compare these two cases in order to draw conclusions about the state of global citizenship education in the US.

Teaching about the World

Although the basic principles are consistent, there are diverse ideological approaches to teaching about the world within nations, particularly in terms of teaching goals and curriculum themes (Fujikane, 2003; Pike, 2000; Tye, 1999). A central issue in reviewing this field in the US is sorting out the range and variety of definitions and
conceptualizations. One way to categorize these definitions is according to their purposes for learning about the world, which also reflect diverse understandings of the relationship of the nation with the rest of the world. I identified three approaches that capture the broad goals, if not the specificities, of efforts to teach about the world: international business training, international studies, and the world system approach. I recognize that these goals do not represent the entire spectrum of teaching efforts. However, I believe that they provide a more productive lens than trying to untangle the entire range of meanings that have been ascribed to the term “global education,” which has been used to describe all three of these approaches.

The goal of international business training is to prepare business leaders and workers for success in the global economy (e.g. Ashton & Green, 1996). This approach, which is part and parcel of the human capital model, conceives of students as future employees and education as skills training for the job market (Schultz, 1961). As Becker (1993[1975]) noted, “Human capital analysis assumes that schooling raises earnings and productivity mainly by providing knowledge, skills, and a way of analyzing problems” (p. 19). From this viewpoint, learning about the world is necessary because competition in the market is global and corporations are multinational. At the secondary level, preparing students for the global economy has been linked with neoliberal education reforms that make schools subservient to economic needs and market mechanisms (Apple, 2001; Torres, 2005).

International studies refers to learning about other world regions and nations through traditional academic disciplines, especially history (e.g., Dunn, 2002). It includes the ways that the field of area studies has been incorporated in secondary education.
although it now represents a broader range of curriculum approaches than I attempt to capture here. Educational approaches covered by this category of international studies typically retain a strong national focus and tends to view the world as a collection of independent nations in competition for scarce resources and political and economic power. Most of the current curricula for teaching about the world in secondary education fall into this category, which include courses such as world history, geography, government, economics, and international relations. These courses typically retain an ethnocentric focus that emphasizes the role of the US in the world and its political interests.

The world system approach is based on a conception of the world as interdependent, focusing on the commonalities and cooperation between nations and fostering understanding between diverse peoples. Proponents tend to emphasize awareness and relativistic knowledge of cultural values in arguing that young people will be better prepared to live in a diverse world by studying the shared problems of humanity (e.g., Hicks, 2003; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005). Much of the global education literature within the field of social studies that draw to some extent on Hanvey, falls into this category. This strand also includes social justice approaches, such as peace studies, conflict resolution and human rights education (e.g. Bickmore, 1999; Reardon, 2001). A social justice approach is the least common in the US where universal, world-order themes like human rights are seen by many as unpatriotic.

Global Education in the US
Global education developed in the US during the late 1960s with the proposal to focus on universal and humanist issues largely in reaction to the ethnocentric and national-oriented stance of area studies during that period\textsuperscript{12} (Arnove, 1999). The field has for several decades relied on Hanvey’s seminal *An Attainable Global Perspective*, which was first published in 1976 by the Center for Teaching International Relations at the University of Denver (Pike, 2000; see Hanvey, 1982[1976]). In this document, Hanvey proposed five global dimensions for organizing school curricula: perspective consciousness, “state of the planet” awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choices. His framework’s main innovation was employing a systems approach as the basis for studying the world in which the US was not the dominant actor. The dimensions of perspective consciousness, interdependence and cross-cultural awareness, in particular, have been closely identified with US global education and continue to be prominent in its vocabulary (see Merryfield, 1998).

Reviews of the global education literature provide evidence of the continuing importance of Hanvey’s principles to global education. In one study, Collins, Czarra and Smith (1998) found that the most commonly employed concepts are “change” and “interdependence.” These concepts are consistent with Hanvey’s framework, which suggests the longevity and consistency of the basic principles in the global education literature since the 1970s. As well, a comprehensive meta-analysis of the (mainly North American) global education literature provides further support of this point (Merryfield, 1998). It identified seven major categories of global education,\textsuperscript{13} most of which echoed Hanvey’s work, with two exceptions: interconnectedness of humans through time and
perceptual growth for prejudice reduction and moral education within critical contexts. These two categories represent important conceptual developments in the field.

Although Hanvey’s work continues to be cited with frequency, in recent years global education has also been united with other areas of social education. Global education has been connected to multiculturalism (e.g., Diaz, Massialas, & Xanthopoulos, 1999) and with environmental thinking (e.g., Selby, 2000) to form new approaches to teaching about the world. Of these two approaches, multiculturalism has been more widely accepted in the educational system although it also has critics. Environmental education has met with considerable resistance and is either absent from state curricula or has been adopted with uncritical perspectives (Disinger, 2001; Gruenewald, 2004). These developments, however, have not found their way into the core global education vocabulary, at least in the US, nor have they systematically incorporated globalization as a curricular topic.

Largely missing from conceptualizations of global education in the US are the controversial debates and critiques surrounding globalization, especially those that contain universal ideas. The emphasis on apolitical issues, such as perspective consciousness, that is evident in much of the US global education literature is not the case in some other countries. In fact, several new conceptualizations of global education have come from scholars working outside of the US (e.g. Pike in Canada). Human rights education, which is not an important subject area in US schooling (Orend, 2004), has become an important curricular subject in other world regions, especially Latin America (Cuellar, 2000) and Europe (Collado & López Atxurra, 2006). When human rights education has been adopted in the US or Canada, it has been primarily nationally-oriented
and has focused on national civil liberties while neglecting social and economic inequalities (Banks, 2002; Orend, 2004). One factor is that it may be difficult to criticize the promotion of free markets in the public educational system, an idea that is deeply embedded in American culture (Nye, 2002).

**Globalization and National Citizenship**

Under globalization, the nation state is no longer the sole economic and political unit, which has resulted in the strongest scenario for the emergence of global citizenship (Delanty, 2000). One position goes so far as to predict that the nation state will disappear, which Rosencrance (1998) referred to as the “virtual state” and Ohmae (2005) as the “region state.” Evidence of the changing role of the nation state can be seen in the creation of regional political units, such as the European Union, as well as in the increasing demands by ethnic groups within nation states seeking political independence. Thus, while some scholars consider global citizenship to be primarily a moral concept, the effects of globalization has made the institutional conception of global citizenship, which includes a range of actors and concepts (e.g. global governance, global democracy, and global civil society), a more concrete possibility (Heater, 2000; Held, 2002).

Two different phenomena related to globalization are the strongest challenges to the sovereignty of the nation state: the rise of the global economy and the spread of international human rights (Torres, 2002). Global markets undermine the sovereignty of nation states because the multinational companies that drive them operate outside of national borders and are not easily controlled by national governments. Regional economic blocs, such as the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and
MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market), indicate the increasing autonomy of markets from nation states (Porter & Vidovich, 2000).

Human rights discourse has also played a major role in redefining the authority of the nation state and citizenship. As a moral framework based on ethical principles of equality and justice, human rights discourse stands in contrast to the utilitarianism of the profit motive and the amoral use of power underlying international relations (Frost, 1998). Human rights covenants provide a basis for the protection of individual and groups rights in light of national and international violations. This is possible because the concept of human rights does not rely on the authority of a limited political community but instead on the universal premise that all people hold the same unconditional rights. Similar to the way that US citizenship is built on rights guaranteed in the Constitution, universal human rights are the foundation of global citizenship within the world community.

**Global Citizenship Education**

What does this mean in terms of rethinking the social studies curriculum? The concept of global citizenship education gets at the issue of what citizens looks like- and what they can and should do- within a rapidly globalizing world in which the role of citizenship is changing. The conceptualization of global citizenship education that I develop in this article builds on the absences of this concept in other approaches to studying about the world by addressing the implications of globalization for citizenship, particularly in terms of the impact of global markets and human rights. This analysis suggests three curricular topics that need to be considered for a global-oriented
citizenship education: 1) international human rights as the foundation of global citizenship, 2) the reconciliation of the universal and the local, and 3) political action beyond the nation state. I argue that educators should consider this conception of global citizenship education as an additional layer for developing democratic citizenship, rather than as an alternative to civics and national citizenship.

1. International human rights

Learning about international human rights has been largely absent from US secondary curricula (Orend, 2004; Ross & Gupta, 1998; Siler, 1989-90). Instead, the topic of human rights in the curriculum is typically “inward-looking” in the sense of being limited to civil and constitutional rights (Orend, 2004). Rarely are international treaties and covenants, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, covered in state curricula. When human rights are included in the curriculum, they typically refer to historical topics-- such as slavery, genocide, or the Holocaust-- and violations that occur in other countries. A good indication of this situation is that in 2000 only twenty states included human rights education in their curriculum (Banks, 2002). However, some of these references are optional guidelines and most employ a knowledge transmission model that neglects the learning of skills.

A curriculum guided by global citizenship would place human rights as the foundation for learning about globalization, in place of global markets. It would highlight international treaties defining human rights, national and international bodies that are involved in safeguarding and implementing human rights, and the ways that universal
human rights are related to national and group rights. For example, human rights would be examined in relationship to students’ diverse identities and allegiances.

2. Reconciling the universal and local

Some scholars argue that the impact of greater cultural exchange, a key effect of globalization, is creating a uniform global consumer culture (e.g. Klein, 2000) while others point to a rich cultural mixing (e.g. Legrain, 2002). Many critics of globalization favor the former viewpoint, suggesting that globalization-led “Americanization” is intensifying ethnic nationalism in reaction to the threat to local cultures and traditions. Similarly, critics of the universal basis of human rights charge that they contain Western values that undermine other cultural values (sometimes referred to as human rights “imperialism”) (Otto, 1997). However, rather than a strictly universal teleology, with which the term “global” is often associated, I suggest that the concept of global citizenship is concerned-- not with processes of uniformity and homogeneity-- but firstly with the intersections and dependencies of the local with the global (sometimes described as “glocalization”). As Robertson (1997) noted, “The particular is what makes the universal work” (p. 6).

Many current practices of teaching about the world have focused on local or universal perspectives without attempting to reconcile them or explain their relationship. Teachers’ understandings reflect this division: they have tended to set universal and local values in opposition while struggling to incorporate these perspectives in their teaching practices (Gaudelli, 2003). I argue that global citizenship education represents a “dialectic of the global and local” in which the critical examination of globalization and
the exercise of universal human rights can be used to protect diverse cultures. This approach would begin to demonstrate the complex relationships between local and global phenomena, and distinguish between the preservation of local cultures (or “somethings”) through global initiatives, in contrast to what has been called the “globalization of nothing” (Ritzer, 2003). This approach should not be construed, however, as undermining or ignoring national citizenship or cultural identities, but as a means for reconciling them with the reality of global interdependency. The implications are that “global” citizenship is fundamentally a local practice, which diverse cultures will conceptualize and construct differently.

3. Political action beyond the nation state

Civic and political participation, especially in terms of national electoral politics, has declined in the US and there are signs that it will continue to decline16 (Putnam, 2000). International studies point out that the majority of Western youth reject traditional politics, in the conventional sense of national electoral politics, but are likely to participate in social movements and protests (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Social movements are increasingly international and global in light of the rapid growth of transnational social movements and advocacy networks (Khagram, Sikkink & Riker, 2002; Tarrow, 2005). Transnational movements have arisen in response to the perceived lack of democratic rules governing globalization and the problems that it is fostering, or intensifying, beyond the reach of national governments to effectively handle (O’Brien et al., 2000).
This dimension addresses key ideas and theories about the ways that politics is changing in light of globalization and how individuals can work for a better world, particularly around issues in which one’s government and other entities, such as corporations, are complicit. Such an orientation, however, would not consist of dogmatically expecting students to take up certain causes but would explore emerging aspects of global politics: diverse forms of action, new agencies and organizations, targets of political activism, and reasons for political participation (Inglehart, 1997; Norris, 2002). It would consist of knowledge of the concepts and practices of global governance, global democracy, and global civil society, and their challenges. This would include understanding the reasons that politics has become increasingly global, outlining the opportunities for participation in local, national, and world-wide activities, and preparation for political participation (Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999). A key focus would be to highlight the ways that local and national political issues are connected to global political issues. It would also be important to illustrate the ways that national political choices affect the rest of the world, such as by studying a range of viewpoints on the effect of US foreign policy.

In outlining these three curricular topics, I acknowledge that they do not include everything an individual should know to be considered a global citizen. Instead of encompassing every issue relevant to global citizenship, my aim here is to broaden the ways that democratic citizenship is understood and taught in schools by considering the implications of globalization for the social studies curriculum.

Method
I used an interpretivist case study approach for this research because my aim was to challenge accepted models and categories of global education by studying educational programs within their natural contexts (Yin, 2002). A case study is particular appropriate for the study of a “specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (Merriam, 1988, p. 9; see also Yin, 2002). This research is interpretivist in the sense that it seeks to understand the teachers’ and students’ experiences and to reveal their views of reality by gathering detailed descriptions of their beliefs about the curriculum (Stake, 1995). My approach highlights the voices of the teachers and students the ways that they made meaning about the practices of teaching about the world in their schools.

I

Case Selection

I used a purposeful sampling technique for selecting the case studies by asking 18 educators, employed at university schools of education or non-governmental organizations, to nominate exemplary secondary education programs dealing with global themes (Patton, 2002). From these nominations, I selected two programs with diverse approaches to teaching about the world: Northeast International High School and the Midwest Program. I chose secondary education programs in the public educational system because they are part of the political discourse and controversies over global education. As well, I expected that at the secondary level there would be greater attention paid to global and international themes.

Procedures
I conducted one to two hour, semi-structured interviews with significantly involved teachers and with focus groups of students in each program. The interview questions focused on the teachers’ and students’ beliefs about and experiences with global education in their program. I also collected curricular materials, including course syllabi, school curricula, and class assignments. In Northeast International High School, I interviewed four teachers and six students. In the Midwest Program, I interviewed two teachers and eight students. The number of participants was determined by their availability and the willingness of the principal or program director to allow teachers and students to take part in the research. All of the teachers taught social studies, with the exception of one foreign language and literature teacher in the Midwest Program, and all had some relevant international experiences, in terms of travel, knowledge of foreign languages, and/or their formal education. One of the teachers in the Midwest Program had studied global education at the graduate level.

To develop the case narratives, I first analyzed the data to make portraits for each case. The data analysis consisted of coding the interviews for identifiable themes using the constant comparative method (Strauss, 1987). I searched for patterns of meaning in the interview data framed by the focus of my inquiry. This process involved reflecting on and analyzing the data during the data collection in order to maintain a “dialogue” between the voices of the teachers and students with the curriculum documents and my interpretations. I read and re-read the interviews, referred to field notes, and compared these with the curriculum documents and class materials that I collected. After reviewing the transcripts, I also asked the teachers to clarify their statements for accuracy and deeper understanding. I noted any contradictory statements and characterized the degree
to which they were representative perspectives among the teachers and students. I then created thematic categories for each case study in terms of program vision, teaching approach, and global themes in the curriculum that reflected the data collected for the study.

In the following section, I present the analysis of the data collected. For each program, I first provide a brief description of the main program and curricular features. Then I develop a picture of the teachers’ and students’ views of the ways that each program educates about the world, drawing on the models outlined in the theoretical framework.

**International Studies in Northeast International High School**

*Overview*

Northeast International High School is a magnet school\(^{17}\) in a large northeastern city that was founded in 1981. According to its mission statement, the school’s purpose is to prepare students “for success in a global marketplace” and “to assume responsibility for the improvement of the human condition, at home and abroad.” It draws ethnically and culturally diverse students from across the city and suburbs who are attracted to its specialized curriculum. The school emphasizes learning about international affairs through coursework and extra-curricular activities such as international student exchanges and travel programs.

Although Northeast High has greater flexibility than the typical public school, its approach is guided by the need to follow district curriculum standards and state testing requirements. Starting with graduates in 2002, students must achieve passing scores on
three assessments: an interdisciplinary project involving citizenship, career and/or multicultural aptitude; a community service project; and exams in English, mathematics and science in grades 11 and 12. However, the school also has some innovative features. The school’s core curriculum requires four years of foreign language (French, Spanish, Latin, or Chinese) and four years of social studies, which are unique requirements in the school district. International-themed courses are also offered, including World Geography, Global Science, Comparative Governments and International Organizations, International Relations, World Mythology, and Modern World Cultures through Film.

Northeast International High School is sponsored by the International Association, a non-profit organization that provides educational training and programs about international issues and public policy. This relationship provides Northeast High with unique academic and extra-curricular opportunities for its students, teachers, and administration. A representative of the International Association works full time at the school to implement its international programs. Sponsored events include school assemblies on political and cultural issues, a student club on international issues, presentations by US and international public figures, annual trips, and an honors seminar that explores in-depth international topics, such as world religions. The International Association also supports programs open to students across the city, such as the Model United Nations and International Court of Justice programs.

Program Worldview

An international studies approach guided Northeast International High School’s curriculum, which emphasized the role of the US in relation to other nations and
portrayed the world as a collection of independent nations. However, it did not fit simply within such an orientation but also dealt with global topics across the curriculum. Robert, one of the social studies teachers, summed up these curricular goals:

To bring students along to an understanding of different cultures, different climates, and different locations. Another aspect of it is to deal with international relations and the opinions that exist outside of the United States towards the United States and toward other parts of the world… So it is really a hybrid, it’s not just one thing. It can be the factual element: where are places located, what are the backgrounds of people in those places, what are the cultures, what is the climate, what is the terrain, things of that sort.

He noted that there is an emphasis on reducing ethnocentrism and to understand the perspectives of other cultures. A focus on the world in the context of US foreign policy, however, mediated these goals. This is evident in the courses that are offered, which are organized along traditional academic disciplines.

Global issues, such as human rights, are introduced in Northeast’s formal curriculum although they receive greater attention in extracurricular activities. These extracurricular activities are an integral part of the school and provide attention to global issues that do not fit as easily within the coursework. A teacher described the way that human rights are dealt with in both the formal curriculum and in extracurricular activities, noting that students

… take courses in international relations or international economics or international policy, or other courses, and also participate in the International Association programs, which would go deeper into some of the human issues. But some of the human issues, some of the human rights issues, would also be dealt with in other courses. You can’t talk about the Second World War, for example, without talking about human rights. It is handled in course work but then there is also a lot of follow up in extracurricular activities especially through the International Association and a variety of programs that they get into the Model United Nations, where a lot of the topics would be on topics like human rights.
Northeast’s curriculum portrayed the topic of human rights primarily in terms of rights violations and within traditional historical narratives. The international context of human rights treaties only occurred in extracurricular activities.

Expert knowledge was central to Northeast’s curriculum. Comprehensive knowledge of cultural, geographic, historical, and political features of other countries was one of the main educational aims of Northeast International High. This knowledge was organized as the foundation for learning about the world, as one student commented:

First you just have to start with knowing where they’re at. You’d be surprised when people don’t know where these countries are, like to put down a name, that is the first thing. The first step is just becoming familiar with the basic customs, understanding some of the people.

A teacher, Maria, corroborated this account, noting that the students typically have very weak knowledge about the world when they enter the school:

I teach all ninth graders, so for me it’s really exciting to see. They don’t really know what is happening to them. At the beginning of the year in September, they think that New Jersey is another country. They really get a sense that there is more out there. It is really from their coursework and also their extra-curriculars. As a teacher it is very validating to see that happening.

Maria’s comments suggest that a basic awareness of the rest of the world was the first step for the students at Northeast High, followed by acquiring general knowledge about geographic regions.

Through its discipline-based coursework and the extra-curricular activities organized by the International Association, students learned about the issues that shape international relations and underlie international events. The school provided students with a variety of opportunities to consult with experts on international issues and to interact with politicians and other professionals. One of the teachers, Robert, stated that students’ knowledge about international issues is the most evident learning outcome:
It gives them the ability to actually speak about what they’re learning versus just sitting in a classroom. I’ve heard these students talking about conflict and international conflicts and they knew more about Israel-Palestine than I did when I got here because they know it, they’ve experienced it and they went to the Israeli consulate to talk to people about it. These are 16 year-olds who are having amazingly productive conversations about world issues because of their experiences.

Northeast High’s students have some opportunities to learn that people around the world have different perspectives and they become acquainted with a range of diverse viewpoints, but these are most strongly presented in extracurricular activities. While the curriculum is more global than for a typical public school, it does not extend beyond the ways that traditional disciplines organize subject matter.

**Teaching about World Cultures**

Culture was represented in the curriculum as part of a traditional disciplinary approach, such as through world history and world geography, as well as through the study of foreign language and the offering of a few internationally-oriented elective courses. The unique aspect of the curriculum was the additional depth of coverage of international topics, particularly through the world geography course and four years of foreign language. While the teachers mentioned the importance of students learning about the world, they clearly felt that the most important impact was on the ways that students of diverse ethnicities and backgrounds interacted and learned to get along. In this sense, the underlying conception of culture in the Northeast High curriculum is focused within the national context in terms of how diverse students learn to co-exist.

This multicultural focus is built into its origin as a magnet school, a reform that aimed to overcome racial or ethnic segregation of students by drawing students from
across the municipality (Smrekar, 1999; Weiler, 1998). One of the social studies teachers, Robert, emphasized the school’s function as a magnet in helping students to gain awareness and tolerance of diversity:

> These kids may not get a hell of a lot of Spanish after four years but they definitely get along… they certainly are able to get along with each other as [city residents] and go out into the workforce and not carry these prejudices that were so widespread and such a part of the city up to say 25 or 30 years ago. So in essence this concept of desegregation through magnet schools has been very successful. So we have these schools of the city set up to break down desegregation.

The school provides opportunities for interaction between students of diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, including immigrants and exchange students. In this respect, Northeast High reinforces learning about other cultures, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

Teachers and students mentioned the multicultural nature of the student population as a resource for students to develop tolerance and respect for diversity. Beth, one of the social studies teachers, described the school climate:

> When students walk in the door of the school the message is that differences are celebrated here… Informally, they are doing it, which I don’t know how else to accomplish this other than you have to have an environment where there is representation from each group and throw them together. And making them interact informally is a choice by them that is a personal decision, which somehow we foster here. I think that informal action is such a key.

The teachers acknowledged, however, that students tend to stay in the social circles that they are part of ethnically. This was reinforced by student clubs based on identity and difference, such as the Asian club or African American club.

**World Systems Approach in the Midwest Program**

*Overview*
The Midwest Program is a cross-district, interdisciplinary initiative that combines global and multicultural curricular perspectives with cooperative learning strategies. Created in 1991 by a consortium of sixteen public school districts comprising the greater municipality, this program accepts students in grades 11 to 12. Students apply directly to their districts in order to participate. Students attend their home schools in the morning and commute to attend the Midwest Program from 12:45 pm to 3:00 pm each day, receiving credits in English, social studies, cultural studies, and the arts. The program meets at different sites in the community, including a church, a community college, and a cultural center.

The Midwest Program employs a project approach in which groups of students work together to study interdisciplinary topics without the use of textbooks or tests. The outcomes and grades are based on the groups’ collective work. The projects integrate global themes with curricular content from literature, history, geography, political science, and the arts. Involvement with the local community is also an important pedagogical goal of the program. Students utilize community resources to link the community with global issues. Through field trips, guest speakers, and interviews, students are required to interact with the community. At the conclusion of projects, the students disseminate their research to appropriate community groups through reports and presentations.

To ensure that different cultural viewpoints are presented authentically, rather than from a North American perspective, “multicultural voice mentors” regularly present insider information and experiences. The mentors are often immigrants to the US and provide insights on curricular topics from their cultural and personal point of view. The
program uses authentic assessment strategies that evaluate a range of skills, knowledge, and perspectives using portfolios and presentations.

**Program Worldview**

The Midwest Program draws heavily on Hanvey’s global education framework, especially the themes of “perspective consciousness” and “cross-cultural awareness.”

One teacher, Martin, specifically referred to this work as an influence on the program:

I was pretty influenced by Hanvey’s work and the ideas of perspective consciousness, recognition of one’s own cultural conditioning, and how our view of the world is shaped in ways that often escape our own detection. We have biases and beliefs that we don’t even recognize that we have that are implicit in our framework of thinking.

Martin’s grounding in these ideas guided his understanding of the purposes of the Midwest Program as a question of culture and the understanding of different worldviews.

He described the purpose in these terms:

… the idea of helping students to recognize their own perspectives and understand how different people see the world differently. Why can two people look at the same thing and draw such radically different conclusions? That’s ultimately at the heart of global education.

Martin’s personal view of education benefited and developed from collaboration with a local teacher education program that emphasized global perspectives and with educational reform organizations. The teachers’ own lives and teaching experiences, especially international experiences, also shaped their pedagogical views. For example, Susan became more conscious of cultural understanding as a pedagogical aim through professional development for the teaching of foreign languages.

A portrayal of the world as an interdependent system underlies the curriculum. Most of the Midwest Program’s projects are interdisciplinary and based on global issues.
focusing on the connections between peoples and places across the world. Examples of these issues include immigration, international adoptions, modern art, and folklore traditions.

In a project entitled “Globeplotters,” students researched, analyzed, and prepared solutions to contemporary global issues, such as rainforest destruction or air pollution. They compared the same issue in several cities or nations through a combination of group work and individual tasks. The expected learning outcomes for the project were the following:

- Acquire awareness and knowledge of global issues which affect the US and the world.
- Develop skills to identify problems/issues and learn how to find information that will aid in developing solutions.
- Use primary and secondary resources to seek multiple perspectives in considering multi-dimensional problems/issues.
- Increase proficiency in using and integrating communication skills.
- Employ appropriate research skills including technology to gather, synthesize and analyze information.
- Appreciate how art and photography are used to communicate views about the world.
- Develop effective skills in collaboration, organization and time management.

At the conclusion, the students shared their research with the community by making presentations to high school students from across the county.

Steven, one of the students, described the central role of understanding other cultures in the Midwest Program:

I don’t think that any of the projects that we ever did was from the standpoint of Americans. We had to research on certain topics like in Africa or in Israel. It was really just a big, broad topic that every culture can relate to and she would split us up in groups and we would focus on this culture and another group would focus on that culture. Then by the end of the month or whenever we were done with the project, we would all present to each other. So therefore we’re also learning about the other cultures.
**Teaching about World Cultures**

The teachers in the Midwest Program emphasized cross-cultural understanding as their primary teaching goal. They understood this to mean knowledge and awareness of the diversity of world cultures and ways of living. One teacher, Susan, described her interpretation of cross-cultural understanding:

… recognition of one’s own cultural conditioning and how our view of the world is shaped in ways that often escape our own detection. We have biases and beliefs that we don’t even recognize that are implicit in our framework of thinking. And that connection to cross-cultural encounters and how we understand other people and learn to recognize their own perspectives.

For Susan, cross-cultural understanding is inadequate without awareness of the diversity of perspectives and worldviews.

The role of cultural mentors is an innovative tool for arriving at more complex understandings of culture. It addressed the conundrum that global educators face in teaching about other cultures of dealing with their own ethnocentrism, and their classed, gendered, and raced identities. The mentors provided a more authentic voice of an “insider” to the culture throughout the school year. Speakers were also brought in for the same purpose of providing expertise on curricular topics. One of the teachers described the impact that a Native American speaker had on the students’ perspective consciousness:

We had a speaker come in from the Native American center and part of his message was, look there is a very stereotypical idea of what Native American life was or is and he was interested in showing them a little more of the living and breathing culture of it. And after that, a lot of the students I think recognized their own ignorance that they had before they entered that session and had a whole new perspective and understanding for the issue and for their culture.

**Cross-case Analysis**
In this section, I first explore political and educational factors in why the cases appeared as they did. Then I analyzed what the programs lacked from the perspective of the three curricular topics of global citizenship education that I outlined previously.

**Why did these cases appear as they did?**

A common feature of International High School and the Midwest Program is that they do not challenge traditional representations of the nation state and national sovereignty in their curricula. Although the teachers did not specifically blame political pressures, in the US there is a history of politics that has restricted the ways that teachers and schools have been able to teach about the world. The most vocal critics have been nationalist and religious conservatives who view global practices of education as unpatriotic or as undermining traditional values (e.g. Kjos, 1996; Saxe, 2003). Looking at the history of global education and the current role of patriotism in social studies education, we can surmise that politics—here referring to the pressure and influence of various groups on the way that education is practiced—indirectly limited the cases’ curricular choices. The powerful tradition of nationalism in the US has restricted the range of acceptable topics that global educators have been able to address. In this context, it is unsurprising that programs would not directly address the most controversial elements of global studies.

Another factor is that both cases were based on curriculum traditions that lack current scholarship on globalization and global studies. Both cases added further credence to characterizations of the limited ways that human rights and other global issues are taught about in the US. In the case of Northeast High, the reliance on a
traditional world studies approach revealed persistent ethnocentric perspectives. For example, one of the teachers in International High believed that topics such as human rights were covered sufficiently in the curriculum and did not see any reason for change.

The cases’ emphasis on culture was also a significant factor. Both made the study of world cultures and diversity within the US major components of their curriculum. While multiculturalism and global education can and should be compatible, in both of these cases the immediacy of multicultural education was a more powerful draw for the students and teachers. This situation highlights a fundamental dilemma in teaching about cultures, peoples, and topics that are distant from the students’ and teachers’ direct experiences. An understanding of global studies as fundamentally cultural is also problematic because it avoids more controversial and political topics.

**What were lacking in the curriculum of these programs?**

The first curricular topic that I outlined, international human rights, was represented in the two cases as primarily historical and national. Neither of the programs included human rights education that systematically studied the nature, definition, or controversies over human rights. In Northeast High, the concept of human rights was typically introduced through major historical events. When asked about representations of human rights, one of the teachers referred to historical examples, such as World War II or the Civil Rights Movement, and none of the teachers mentioned rights in connection with international covenants. International human rights were only presented in extracurricular activities such as the Model United Nations. In the Midwest Program, human rights were introduced from a relatively more international perspective, most
often as part of projects in which students could select human rights as an issue to study.

It was not the primary focus of study, however, nor was much attention paid to international covenants.

Second, there were diverse representations of the global-local relationship. In Northeast High, concerns with local themes tended to moderate teaching about the world. For example, the theme of multicultural tolerance dominated the teachers’ discussion of the global effect of the curriculum. While this is a valuable and needed focus in schools, it also illustrates the way that a concentration on the needs of the multi-ethnic US has overshadowed global perspectives in the social studies curriculum. Rather than showing the connections and disjunctions between universal and local values, issues, and events, these values were most often portrayed separately in the curriculum. From a global citizenship perspective, multicultural themes in the curriculum should be connected to the global conditions that shape racial and ethnic inequalities. The Midwest Program made the global-local relationship more explicit by integrating the study of global issues and cross-cultural perspectives systematically across its curriculum. In some cases, such as in a project on the impact of international immigration in the US, projects on global topics were used to explain local issues, thereby pushing students to understand connections between the world and their nation and community. However, this was not the primary objective. One explanation is that the Midwest program is designed specifically to complement the education that they receive in their home schools, which did not pay much attention to global issues.

Third, international political actors and movements were not an explicit focus in either of the programs and were largely absent from the curriculum. In International
High, the traditional organization of the courses emphasizing geography, international relations, and foreign language did not address the concepts of global governance, global democracy, and global civil society. In the Midwest Program, issues of transnational politics were also largely skirted. Some international political issues, such as the treatment of indigenous people in different nations, were part of the curriculum but were only one of several issues students could choose to study.

However, transnational politics, particularly in terms of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and transnational social movements were presented to students in both programs through extracurricular activities. International High, for example, brought in representatives from Amnesty International and CARE International that spoke about human rights violations and environmental problems. Learning about these global issues led some students to get involved through volunteering or politically, as was the case with a student from International High who spent a summer working to preserve the South American rainforest. Although global governance was not typically addressed, students did gain a sense of the growing global political scene and the actors involved, particularly social movements. Together, these constitute a considerable effort in presenting current developments in politics.

**Conclusion**

The Midwest Program and Northeast International High School illustrate some of the contours of teaching about the world in the US. When compared with a conceptualization of education for global citizenship that takes globalization into account, they also point out some of the limitations of, and challenges to, teaching about the world
in social studies education. Rather than preparing youth for the challenges of an interdependent, globalizing, and still starkly unequal world, this research suggest that the US education system has not overcome the political and cultural stigmas that cast globalism as anti-American. Thus, the reality of the US education system at best approximates the goal of developing national citizens with some relativistic understanding and awareness of the rest of the world.

This research indicates that while a global perspective is often incorporated in these two programs, the concept of global citizenship, suggesting a commitment and responsibility to the global community based in human rights, is less coherent. Both programs overlooked some of the significant ways that scholarship on globalization can be adapted to the social studies curriculum and their implications for democratic citizenship. Substantial work is needed to update them to contemporary scholarship.

This article should not be understood as a criticism of social education per se, but as evidence of the need for its re-conceptualization in light of globalization. The implications of globalization have not been taken seriously in social studies education as a curriculum topic. Yet I argue that the purposes of social education, which include democratic citizenship, social justice and the improvement of society, are inaccessible when divorced from the ways that national problems are linked to social, political, and economic issues at a global level, particularly the role of US entities (the government, corporations, NGOs, and citizens) in the processes of globalization. In light of this research, social studies curriculum makers should consider the ways that curriculum topics can address the local-global relationship as well as integrate current scholarship on globalization.
I have proposed the concept of global citizenship education as a means for addressing the changing nature of democratic citizenship in the context of globalization. If taken seriously, this research has important consequences for the social studies curriculum as presently organized. It is time for teachers, schools, and professional organizations to recognize and address these issues pedagogically. US global educators, however, have a great challenge in this regard because, as has been noted elsewhere and reinforced by this research, “the Americans… don’t have a conception, they don’t have a philosophical, cultural conception, of the interpenetration of the particular and the universal” (Robertson, 1997, p. 225). Ultimately, we have to decide whether social education will consciously recognize the role of global citizenship as engagement with the rest of the world situated within the framework of human rights, or if the terms of engagement will be dictated by global markets and their supporters.
References


This “we” usually refers to the West and does not include world regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, that are weakly connected to the global economy.

There is some evidence that this situation is not unique to the US. When a multinational team developed curricular guidelines for global civic education, the result shared many of the main principles of global education, with more specific emphasis on the environment, international politics, and human rights (Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999).

This research was part of a larger project funded by the Ford Foundation that investigated the diverse expressions of global education initiatives within different national contexts. The original project examined case studies in the following nine countries, in addition to the US: Albania, Brazil, Canada (Ontario), Czech Republic, Japan, Jordan, Poland, South Africa, United Kingdom (England and Wales).

Giddens (1990) has defined globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 68).

Although there are diverse perspectives on whether globalization is ultimately having a positive or negative effect on national development and global poverty, there is some consensus that market globalization has negatively affected the so-called “developing world” by intensifying poverty, stratifying the distribution of wealth, and contributing to environmental degradation (Bowers & Apffel-Marglin, 2005; MacArov, 2003; Roberts & Thanos, 2003).

While globalization is popularly referred to as “Americanization” by the rest of the world, British sociologist Roland Robertson has questioned this label. He points out that historically the US entered the international community long after the basic structure of the global system was established by European nations (Robertson, 1997).

All names of the schools, teachers, and organizations have been changed to protect anonymity.

Gutek (1993) identified eight types of international education in the US: comparative education, foreign policy studies, regional or area studies, international development and development education, peace education, international exchange programs, global education, and international business education. Although these categories might have been more clearly differentiated in the past, they do not satisfactorily
describe approaches to teaching about the world today where there is considerable overlap between these categories. Gutek’s classification is also problematic because it ranges across different levels of schooling.

9 My intent here is to provide a useful overview of approaches to teaching about the world. Each of these categories also contains diverse perspectives, ranging from the traditional to more progressive and critical.

10 For a critique of human capital theory, see Bouchard (1998).

11 For example, see Ludden (2000) for a contemporary approach to area studies that considers the impact of globalization.

12 A proposal sponsored by the Foreign Policy Association entitled “Examination of Objectives, Needs and Priorities in International Education in U.S. Secondary and Elementary Schools” was one of the first documents to outline a global education approach distinct from international education or area studies (Anderson & Becker, 1969; Becker, 2002).

13 1) Understanding of humans and the world/planet as dynamic, organic and interdependent systems; 2) Understanding of global issues; 3) Understanding of diverse cultures and multiple perspectives; 4) Understanding of, skills in and responsibility for making choices and decisions and taking action locally and globally; 5) Interconnectedness of humans through time; 6) Cross-cultural understanding, interactions, and communication; and 7) Perceptual growth for prejudice reduction and moral education within critical contexts.

14 Here, I am referring to the literature that self-identifies with the field of global education. There are also many authors who deal with education and global issues such as the environment, peace, and human rights but that do not conceptually position themselves in relation to global education.

15 See Tye (1999) regarding the avoidance of controversial issues in global education.

16 Norris (2002) show evidence that world-wide, political participation has not declined but that it has transformed from emphasizing political parties to more diverse forms of activism.

17 Magnet schools implement a specialty curriculum emphasizing a particular subject matter or teaching methodology that is not generally offered to students in the same district, such as the performing arts, in order to draw students from across the school district. The U.S. Department of Education provides funding for magnet schools (Smrekar, 1999).
For example, in February 2006 the Upper St. Clair school board in suburban Pittsburgh voted to terminate its International Baccalaureate program amidst charges by school board members that it contradicted “Judeo-Christian values” and that it was linked to the “Marxist” Earth Charter. The program was reinstated by the board in April, 2006 after community protests and an offer of financial support from State Governor Rendell (Roddy, 2006).