

## Vide Conferencing for Global Citizenship Education: Wise Practices for Social Studies Educators

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### Abstract

Vide conferencing activities hold particular promise for social studies educators hoping to mediate humanizing experiences that will help students grow as citizens of the world. In this paper, we review literature on vide conferencing for global citizenship education and analyze those efforts towards cosmopolitan citizenship. Through our analysis of scholarly, popular, and practitioner sources, we present three general, and often overlapping, purposes for vide conferencing -- intercultural experiences, intercultural projects, and learning about cultures -- while providing a variety of examples and options from elementary to higher education. Educators encourage intercultural experiences when the primary purpose for participants' vide conferencing activities is to learn about the people, communities, and cultures with whom they engage. The primary aim of intercultural projects is for participants to utilize vide conferencing to complete some task together. Educators can help students learn about cultures by bringing in people from different countries or cultures to share their expert knowledge or perspectives. We hope educators can glean insights from the vide conferencing cases provided in the text so as to make decision appropriate to their unique students' needs. None of these approaches is necessarily superior to the others, but they may require different time and energy commitments. We also share technology requirements and common problems with vide conferencing. Finally, we conclude with implications for educators and researchers.

**Keywords:** *Global citizenship, video-conferencing, social studies*

### Introduction

A key aim of social studies education is to help students grow as global citizens (e.g. NCSS, 2013; Thornton, 2005). However, this is not an easy task as teachers must draw on a variety of methods to help students understand peoples and places with which they may have little familiarity or contact. Educational technologies can help educators accomplish these aims, but as Leduc (2013) found in his study with 29 Canadian teachers, only 8 teachers could make any technology recommendations for global citizenship education (GCE) and many stated they needed support, particularly with vide conferencing activities. We believe vide conferencing activities hold particular promise for social studies educators hoping to mediate humanizing experiences that will help students grow as citizens of the world.

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We define videoconferencing as synchronous audio and video communication between participants from two or more geographic sites. While videoconferencing technologies have been available to the larger public since the late 1990s, educational uses of them in the social studies have been both underpracticed and undertheorized. There is a dearth of scholarly literature concerning how videoconferencing might be used for global citizenship education (GCE). In this paper, we aim to not only highlight existing sources -- scholarly, popular, and practitioner, but we organize them into a framework that can help scholars and educators plan how to utilize videoconferencing for global citizenship education (GCE). First, we will offer background information for videoconferencing in education, and social studies education in particular. We will then describe and define global citizenship education to provide a lens for considering purposes for videoconferencing. We will present three general purposes for videoconferencing -- intercultural experiences, intercultural projects, and learning about cultures -- while providing a variety of examples and options from elementary to higher education. We will share technology requirements and common problems of videoconferences. Finally, we will conclude with implications for educators and researchers.

### **Videoconferencing in Education**

Videoconferencing technologies date back to at least the motion video telephone that was introduced by AT&T at the 1964 World's Fair in New York, and were utilized for as a way for businesses to conduct long distance meetings (Lawson, Comber, Gage, & Cullum-Hanshaw, 2010). These technologies first started to be used for similar reasons in higher education settings, particularly in distance learning programs. Improvements in linkages, accessories, connections, and equipment led to proliferation of videoconferencing to more settings, including K-12 schools (Lawson, Comber, Gage, & Cullum-Hanshaw, 2010). While videoconferencing became increasingly possible in many schools, even receiving governmental support in the United Kingdom as a medium to "contribute to global citizenship" (p. 296), usage rates by educators are difficult to determine in most countries and reports tend to center around single events or uses (see Lawson, Comber, Gage, & Cullum-Hanshaw, 2010 for more detailed history and literature review). The rise of free services like Skype in 2003, Google Hangout in 2013, and smartphone apps like FaceTime in 2010 have increased the number of people, particularly youth, videoconferencing (Buhler, Neustaedter, & Hillman, 2013).

Of course, when discussing uses of technology worldwide, educators must consider not only access to technology, but opportunities to participate and develop technological skills and competencies (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009). While the Internet, social media, and emerging technologies like videoconferencing offer new opportunities for participation in local and international dialogues, it is important to understand how mediums can empower democratic engagement, not reinforce inequalities (Norris, 2001). There has been evidence that, for example, social media platforms can lead to new forms of protest and engagement (Tufekci, 2013), but each context and existing resources must be considered. Even when a group may lack access, educators can work to find solutions. For example, Darfuri in remote and isolated refugee camps in Chad are connecting to educators and secondary students across the U.S. through the software Pazocalo, which enables users to work both online and offline. This innovative software is a promising opportunity to narrow the digital divide and humanize others by providing more opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration on social media platforms to those who have inconsistent Internet access. Despite the potential of innovative software, such as Pazocalo, obstacles remain. Computers, cameras, solar panels, and batteries are necessary in order that the Darfuri refugees be able to participate, which clearly is a burden in many parts of the world (Bennion, 2013).

Videoconferencing affords educators a means by which to transcend geographic bounds with synchronous communication that holds potential for participants to feel social presence that may be less available in asynchronous interactions (e.g., discussion boards). Belderrain (2006) argued that educators should consider how emerging technologies can mediate social presence where students perceive “intimacy, immediacy” (p. 149). Small, interactive group activities hold particular promise. However, technical difficulties or ineffectual pedagogy (e.g., too much lecture, completing individual tasks during session, checking individual understandings) can limit the affordances of videoconferencing technologies (Gillies, 2008). Gillies (2008) suggested that even with videoconferencing, students and lecturers often felt disconnected from each other for a variety of reasons (e.g., lag time, audio/video problems, participant relation to camera/mic, inattentive/inactive participants). Simply utilizing videoconferencing technologies for remote lectures can fail to engage participants. While teaching approaches and student engagement are critical, there is limited research concerning videoconferencing pedagogies (Gillies, 2008).

### **Videoconferencing in the Social Studies**

Since the rise of the Internet in the 1990s there has been a general lack of research concerning online education in the social studies (Journell, 2014), and the same holds true for the emergence of videoconferencing technologies (Journell & Dressman, 2011). While videoconferencing offer a means for bringing the people of the world into social studies classrooms, there is little evidence this is taking place on a large scale. In 2003, Bolick and colleagues reported that videoconferencing was seldom utilized in social studies methods courses, and we were unable to identify any reports on usage in K-12 or higher education social studies courses since that time. However, there are exceptional examples of social studies educators -- and educators in general -- utilizing videoconferencing platforms from which we can draw insights.

Several U.S. social studies educators have used videoconferencing in pre-service teacher methods courses for intranational course collaborations (Karran, Berson, & Mason, 2001; Mason & Berson, 2000). Good and colleagues (2005) experimented with the use of videoconferencing between U.S. social studies methods classes for elementary pre-service teachers and participants “commented that they learned more about content and pedagogy” (n.p.). In particular, 17 of 18 pre-service teachers reported learning more about the geography, culture, and history of the place of videoconferencing counterparts. Similarly, Hilburn and Maguth (2012) utilized videoconferencing to create communities of practice that yielded “positive student perceptions of the value of the collaboration, learning new teaching strategies and educational technologies, and learning from multiple social studies instructors’ expertise” (p. 316). While intranational engagements can cross social, cultural, and economic boundaries in meaningful ways, this was not the primary aim or result of these videoconferencing activities. However, these cases do still provide examples of successes and shortcomings in uses of videoconferencing in general and we will reference components of similar cases below.

### **Global Citizenship Education for Cosmopolitan Citizenship**

Social studies scholars have long championed global citizenship education as an important purpose of the field (e.g., Garii, 2000; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2012; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005; Rapoport, 2013) along with the importance to increase understanding across cultural and national boundaries (e.g., Carano & Stuckart, 2013; Merryfield, 2000). The globalization of our political, economic, environmental, and technological systems has changed the skills students need to become effective citizens (Merryfield, 2000). The pace by which these systems have transformed

are unprecedented (Kennedy, 2007). As a result, 21st century students must be educated for this new global reality if they are to develop the skills necessary to interact effectively with people who differ from them culturally, geographically, and nationally.

A central aim of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has been to help students grow as cosmopolitan citizens who can engage in transcultural communications across cultures, borders, and spaces (Banks, 2008), but K-12 social studies educators in the U.S. have struggled to embrace such perspectives and curricula (Rapoport, 2009). As the world has become increasingly interconnected over the past decade, arguably, there has been an increased emphasis in the literature on the need for GCE (e.g., Kirkwood-Tucker, 2009; Zong, 2009; Carano, 2013). Despite this increase, scholars have offered varying aims for global citizenship (Leduc, 2013; Rapoport, 2013). For example, Merryfield and Wilson (2005) identified 10 elements of understanding critical to GCE, including (a) local/global connections, (b) perspective consciousness and multiple perspectives, (c) the world as a system, (d) global issues, (e) power in a global context, (f) nonstate actors, (g) attention to prejudice reduction, (h) cross-cultural competence, (i) research and thinking skills, participation in local and global communities, and (j) use of electronic technologies. On the other hand, Myers (2006) simplified GCE by suggesting only three primary GCE themes for school curricula include (a) international human rights, (b) the reconciliation of the universal and the local, and (c) political action beyond the nation-state. Myers' third dimension is intended encourage exploring the ways that globalization is changing politics and how the individual can work towards having an impact in improving the world.

While understanding multiple perspective and global human rights are often mentioned in GCE conceptualizations, the analysis of power relations and knowledge production in the GCE literature has been lacking (Andreotti & Pashby, 2013). Social media in the social studies classroom has the potential to fill this gap by allowing students to explore these power relationships while leading to increased equity and understandings by providing access to information and information technology (Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski, & Goldman, 2014). Furthermore, Harshman and Augustine (2013) found evidence that teacher and student beliefs in global citizenship is a spectrum that will change based on experiences, habits of mind, and the extent to which one has authentic learning opportunities in global events. Used wisely, videoconferencing can potentially mediate humanizing experiences with others and help students move to a higher level along the GCE spectrum.

Scholars have also presented varying dimensions over the years. Early GCE advocates regularly focused on understanding systematic interconnections, developing cultural understandings, and individuals' impacts on others (e.g. Anderson, 1990; Hanvey, 1976; Tye, 1990). More recent advocates also focus on gaining analytical skills, digital skills, and taking informed action (e.g., Carano, 2013; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005). GCE values also tend to vary among different countries, including more developed countries and less developed countries and Western and Eastern countries (White & Openshaw, 2002).

United States teachers, the ones who are on the front lines with our children, may have yet another iteration of GCE. Rapaport (2013) studied four social studies high school teachers interested in exploring international issues and found that while they agreed with many traits articulated by early GCE advocates, their visions were also undergirded by nationalism. He found the following four basic GCE goals outlined by the teachers:

1. Understanding of other cultures.
2. Learning and understanding of the world around us.
3. Being aware of global interdependence.
4. Better understanding of the place of the United States in the world.

In another approach to GCE, Gaudelli (2009) used heuristics to identify and define five separate GCE conceptualizations: (a) neoliberal, (b) national, (c) Marxist, (d) world justice and governance, and (e) cosmopolitan. A neoliberal citizen is affiliated nationally but governed by a universal market conception. A national identity is defined by a social compact between the national and the citizen. The Marxist GCE discourse bases global citizenship on class and transcends national borders. Finally, world justice and governance perceives global citizenship through international law and global human rights. Finally, a cosmopolitan GCE focuses less on the ends and more on the means to further the dialogue of living in a shared global society. In this conceptualization, it is critical for the person to gain an understanding in matters of *value*, *morality*, and *humane treatment*. Gaudelli (2009) defined these three GCE cosmopolitan characteristics as follows:

1. Value: Gaining a deeper understanding of what others' believe is important and useful in life; and taking informed action in resolving possible conflicts to values.
2. Morality: The understanding of right and wrong and that peoples' understandings of right and wrong may differ depending on diversity and multiple perspectives.

3. Humane treatment: Humanizing people rather than seeing them as a generalization or stereotype while treating each other with empathy and respect.

Due to GCE's complex nature, and the variety of perspectives and beliefs about this concept throughout the world, it is unlikely an authoritative definition will be attained in the near or distant future. Additionally, the different GCE conceptualizations lead to differing pedagogical approaches and outcomes (Andreotti & Pashby, 2013). Taking these varied definitions into consideration and mindful of a definition's impact on pedagogical approaches, we will utilize Gaudelli's (2009) cosmopolitan framework of GCE as a lens for understanding videoconferencing activities. We will use italics in the sections below to highlight how these three GCE characteristics (*value*, *morality*, and *humane treatment*) have, and can be, embedded in videoconferencing activities.

## **Methods**

In 2010, Lawson, Comber, Gage, and Cullum-Hanshaw conducted a landscape review of videoconferencing in education with the aim of establishing "broad outlines of what is known in an under-researched field" so as to support future research (p. 296). While some additional research has been conducted on videoconferencing in education in general, there is still very little literature in the area, particularly concerning our focus of how videoconferencing can support Global Citizenship Education (GCE). Therefore, we analyzed scholarly, practitioner, and popular sources on videoconferencing for GCE to offer broad outlines for scholars and educators who seek to research the topic or plan class activities. While we relied largely on scholarly sources, we did not limit ourselves to such academic texts as we believe practitioner articles, blogs, and news stories also offer insights into what is possible with videoconferencing. Moreover, while we both come to this project from a social studies education background, we will draw from cases of educators both inside (Journell & Dressman, 2011; Maguth, 2014; Krutka & Carano, 2016) and outside (e.g., Anikina, Sobinova, & Petrova, 2015; Anastasiades, Filippousis, Karvunis, Siakas, Tomazinakis, Giza, & Mastoraki, 2010) the field who used videoconferencing for GCE.

In an effort to analyze our sources holistically, we engaged in what Creswell (2007) called horizontalization whereby we developed a list of significant statements, sentences, and quotes from the literature that focused on how videoconferencing has been used with students. Next, we developed clusters, or meaning units, from these significant statements into themes. In the end, we identified three general and interconnected approaches to videoconferencing for GCE around

which we organized the next section: (a) intercultural experiences, (b) intercultural projects, and (c) learning about cultures. Through our narratives below, we hope educators can glean insights from the ways others have utilized videoconferencing in their classes so as to make decision appropriate to their unique students' needs. None of these approaches is necessarily superior to the others, but they may require different time and energy commitments. For example, *intercultural experiences* can require several synchronous sessions that require more scheduling and time whereas learning about cultures might be accomplished in a single half hour session. Teachers should use their judgment to determine their pedagogical aims for achieving GCE characteristics within their classes.

### **Purposes for Videoconferencing for Global Citizenship Education**

As we searched for different purposes for videoconferencing that could contribute to Global Citizenship Education (GCE), we encountered a number of general benefits, including reaching homebound students (Ferriter, n.d.; Raths, 2015), distance learning (Acacio, 2012; Raths, 2015; Richardson, Fox, & Lehman, 2012), overcoming geographic isolation (Mader & Ming, 2015; Raths, 2015), student-teacher engagement outside of class time (Acacio, 2012), and online tutoring (Mader & Ming, 2015). However, in the following three sections, we will focus on the three themes we identified that are centered around the purposes for which educators used videoconferencing for GCE: (a) intercultural experiences, (b) intercultural projects, and (c) learning about cultures. Both intercultural experiences and projects are centered primarily around interactions between videoconferencing participants (e.g., Namibian and Chinese students) either learning about each other or working on a project together. On the other hand, learning about cultures involves more one-way exchanges (e.g., historian from Haiti describes Haitian Revolution and its legacy to Egyptian students). Of course, class activities often do not neatly fit into any single purpose, but we made an effort to organize videoconferencing lessons by the aims that seemed most central to activities.



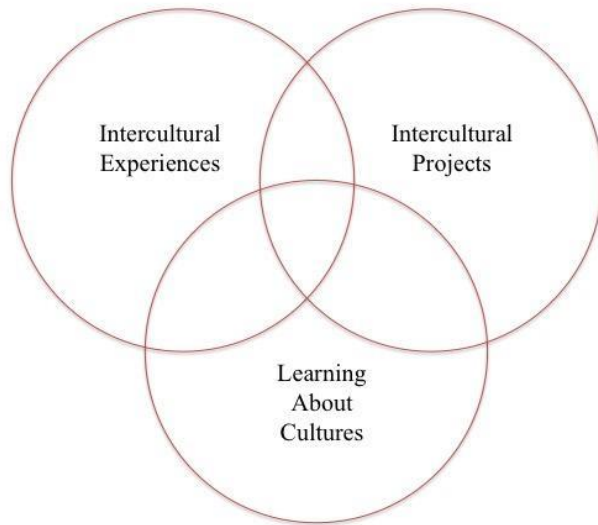


Figure 1. Three Purposes for Videoconferencing for Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

Educators encourage *intercultural experiences* when the primary purpose for participants' videoconferencing activities is to learn about the people, communities, and cultures with whom they engage. Such activities may consist of students sharing their personal and communal stories or discussing topics they find important. This category of videoconferencing might resemble a 21st century iteration of an international Pen Pal. On the other hand, the primary aim of *intercultural projects* is for participants to utilize videoconferencing to complete some task together. While intercultural learning experiences will almost assuredly take place in such projects, the driving aim of the activities concerns projects like studying global deforestation or sharing a diversity profile of their local communities with international peers. Finally, educators can help students *learn about cultures* by bringing in people from different countries or cultures to share their expert knowledge or perspectives. These experiences tend to be more of a one-way exchange with, for example, a Vietnamese citizen offering American students a first-hand account of their experiences and perspectives of the American-Vietnam war.

### **Intercultural experiences**

When educators placed intercultural experiences at the center of videoconferencing activities, teachers' driving aspiration for students was to gain deeper understandings of those with

whom they engaged. Of course, getting to know someone from a different culture can pose linguistic, cultural, and temporal obstacles, but these very challenges present opportunities for the growth as global citizens. Students who engage in videoconferences across borders can share cultures and histories, discuss current events from unique perspectives, or engage in other dialogues to enhance cross-cultural awareness. As an example of what is possible, elementary teacher Leigh Cassell (2014) asked her students to choose a country in which they were interested and she arranged videoconferences with students in 16 different countries to “teach us about their people, communities, cultures, and celebrations” (Cassell, 2014, n.d.). As the following examples attest, this aim also has the potential of promoting each of the GCE characteristics (*value, morality, and humane treatment*) by allowing students the opportunity to engage in real time face-to-face cross-cultural dialogue that provides a deeper understanding of individuals often living on other continents with different value systems, cultures, and standards of living.

One example of videoconference activities organized as intercultural experiences is Face to Faith (since renamed Generation Global), an educational program that offers students cross-cultural videoconferencing opportunities in approximately 400 schools in 17 countries (Beauchamp, 2011). The program promotes students gaining cross-cultural and interreligious understandings while discussing global issues, including the environment, poverty, and religious freedom. Because of their focus on gaining deeper understandings of others, these ideals fit squarely in the GCE characteristics of *values* and *morality*. Additionally, Face to Faith appears to provide opportunities for *humane treatment* by providing students the opportunity to see their cross-cultural counterparts as more than generalizations. Ramsey, a high school student in New York city provided an example of this humanizing element when he stated, “Face to Faith helped me to really figure out what it means to be a global citizen. I can take away the idea that I can now safely enter dialogue with someone from different religions so that we can further advance our opinions. A global citizen appreciates everyone’s differences” (Beauchamp, 2011, p. 5). The format includes teacher training and ongoing support to enable students to engage in student-centered, collaborative learning with peers of disparate beliefs worldwide. Students are prepared for videoconference sessions by learning background information about the their peers’ country, culture, and religion. While the number and length of videoconference collaborations vary, an initial session focuses on students learning about each others’ classes and subsequent meetings allow students to delve deeper into their counterparts’ beliefs, values, and issues. In between

meetings, students reflect on and explore religious and global issues on which they are learning and dialoguing. Face to Faith also enables students to continue their new connections with moderated discussion forums dedicated to global issues.

Educators can utilize a variety of ways to organize experiences around issues related to their curriculum or communities. For example, like Face to Faith, many educators have used asynchronous communication via social media, discussion boards, or e-mail to support synchronous videoconferencing sessions. We (Krutka & Carano, 2016) shared a case whereby social studies pre-service teachers from the U.S. ( $n=16$ ) and English learners from the Gaza strip ( $n=16$ ) used Skype and Facebook to connect over the course of a university term with the aim of building “cross-cultural awareness and new media literacies that could potentially be applied in their future secondary classrooms” (p. 213). While Ken (Author) stated that his students grew in democratic media literacy skills through the activities, his primary aim was for his students to grow as global citizens. His students demonstrated new understandings in the *humane treatment* GCE characteristic through reported reductions in misunderstandings, stereotypes, and misinformation. Notably, students also stated that the experiences humanized their counterparts in ways that transcended traditional learning activities that simply center around gathering information about others. Some students even used this opportunity to take informed action, a component of *values*, through raising awareness on issues often not heard by the public through establishing videoconference sessions in their middle and high school classrooms in which Gaza counterparts provided a counter perspective to the dominant U.S. media narrative story of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict taking place.

Likewise, Anikina, Sobinova, & Petrova (2015) organized a telecollaboration project between three universities -- two in the United States and one in Russia. The foremost objective was to foster international collaboration and understanding with an opportunity to develop language acquisition skills. Utilizing the social network VKontakte (VK), students were paired with a global peer and engaged in eight weeks of dialogue. Because of the time difference, asynchronous communication was largely employed and Skype used as was possible. Through survey results and discussions, improved GCE characteristics were noted. The authors concluded that project participation enriched languages skills along with increasing students’ cultural awareness through gaining a deeper understanding of their counterparts’ *values* and a greater appreciation of *humane treatment* through the humanizing nature of the collaboration.

Journell and Dressman (2011) describe another case of intercultural experiences where U.S. pre-service teachers and Moroccan undergraduates videoconferenced about religion. These exchanges forced students on both sides to confront existing stereotypes and consider diverse perspectives through critical and intense dialogue, which, arguably, enabled students to gain a deeper understanding in each of Gaudelli's (2009) GCE cosmopolitan characteristics. For example, during one exchange over the role of media on Americans' views of Islam, a U.S. student stated, "All I know of Islam is what I see on the news," to which a Moroccan student countered, "The media tried to make a terrorist out of every Muslim after 9/11. How can we teach students to be more critical of the media?" (p. 110). Because the instructors established a semistructured format that focused on understanding perspectives on these types of issues, students spent up to an hour working through these issues. In all of these cases, educators prioritized intercultural experiences as their primary rationale for videoconferencing and reported meaningful benefits for students as cosmopolitan citizens.

### **Intercultural projects**

While intercultural experiences may not always be the foremost focus of intercultural projects, participants can experience similar benefits of learning about other cultures through videoconferencing interactions. Organizations such as iEARN and ePAls offer classrooms opportunities to connect with other classrooms around the world and collaborate on an array of projects. Working on projects in this manner can also potentially enhance each of the cosmopolitan GCE characteristics of *value*, *morality*, and *humane treatment*.

The Classroom WithOut Walls program established by a school district on the Alaskan Kenai Peninsula has enabled its district's high school students<sup>[11]</sup> to connect with students in Afghanistan, Israel, Yemen, and several U.S. states (Raths, 2015). Small groups of students videoconference with students in another school to work on projects together. For example, recently, students in a couple Alaskan social studies classes gained skills in the GCE characteristics of *value* and *humane treatment* by working on a conflict tree project with students in Palestine and Ghana. During the project, student participants from each school developed and shared "conflict trees" as a means to understand the root causes and effects of conflict across cultures.

Camardese & Peled (2014) studied the impact of an international book-sharing collaboration between U.S. middle school students and Israeli peers conducted via videoconferences. The authors' findings on the impact of videoconference interactions included:

1. Students' responses indicated an increased understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives (*morality*).
2. Students found many common interests across cultures (e.g., music, type of dress).
3. Students' responses described the importance of gaining another perspective (*humane treatment*).

Students explained that the videoconference collaborations “show how small the world is, and how much alike we all are. We have the same needs, same desires, same interests,” and another commented that, “I learned that language and distance do not have anything to do with the people inside. We are all people. We are all friends” (p. 26). The videoconference medium allowed students to transcend geographic boundaries to engage in international discourses that were intimate, critical, and may not have been possible otherwise. By confronting stereotypes, students gained skills that can help them develop an increased appreciation for the *humane treatment* of others. During debriefing, students in both countries expressed a positive and drastic shift in their perceptions of their international peers.

At the university level, Maguth (2014) ran a digitally mediated global learning project between his 26 secondary social studies methods students at a large Midwestern university and secondary students in Thailand. In the project, his university students engaged in weekly asynchronous (i.e., ePals, YouTube) and synchronous (i.e., Skype) exchanges with Thai students, and learned about Thai *value* characteristics, such as culture and history, through the discussions and classroom reflections. The university students then constructed lesson plans for Thai students on American imperialism and the Thai instructor selected some of the lessons to implement with the secondary students. At the end of the project U.S. and Thai students reflected on the project together via Skype exchanges. As a result of the project, students in both countries demonstrated better understandings of the other country's histories, issues, and cultures. Additionally, this authentic learning experience helped U.S. social studies methods students be better prepared to design their own digitally mediated global learning classroom project that respects multiple perspectives.

As the previous cases illustrate, educators can organize international videoconferencing projects in various ways with an array of benefits. Teachers from Missouri and Scotland aimed to engage 11 and 12 year-old students as multicultural citizens at both the local and global levels through research (Thurston, 2004). Students learned to think globally and act locally in eradicating

inequality and injustice in all their <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>forms by completing research about diversity in their towns through surveys and interviews, gaining familiarity with peers abroad via e-mail, and then sharing slide presentations via videoconference with their peers abroad. Students showed growth describing their own ethnicities, diversity in their towns, and problems in local news coverage. Hopper (2014) conducted a case study on a K-8 Texas school that implemented global projects through videoconferencing in various grade levels. Videoconferencing collaborations were project-based learning activities that included a kindergarten butterfly project between Texas students and those in Mexico, a first grade cross-cultural project between the Texas students and those in Japan, Belarus, and Kenya, and Texas third graders comparing and contrasting moon phases with students in Wales. The activities allowed students to gain improved GCE skills in *value* and *humane treatment* by having the opportunity to get to know their cross-cultural participants as individuals rather than stereotypes while working on action projects that required students to get to know the beliefs of their counterparts. The videoconferencing activities also helped students improve critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, independent learning, information media, global and cultural awareness, technological literacy, group learning, and learning different perspectives.

### **Learning about cultures**

Learning about cultures through videoconferencing can include bringing in guest experts for lecturers or taking students on virtual field trips. While each of Gaudelli's (2009) three cosmopolitan GCE characteristics can be addressed, videoconferencing activities in this category tend to be less immersive than the previous two we described. It can be akin to learning about a city from a tour guide as opposed to living there. However, there are a number of reasons why these more one-way activities might be an appropriate choice for educators. Both intercultural experiences and projects can require large chunks of time and coordination that can be difficult or impractical for many situations. Moreover, bringing in experts or single experiences can be easier to align with curricula that must address specific content or standards. The quality of experiences, like with any videoconferencing, largely depends on the selection and organization of activities. Bringing in a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis or learning about the American Revolution from a British historian can leave a lasting impression on students.

Educators can utilize videoconferencing technologies to allow students to travel the world without a passport through digitally mediated field trips. This can level the playing field by

allowing students to see other parts of the world in real-time and experiences can be customized to meet teachers' educational goals (Zaino, 2009). Students can learn about other cultural perspectives through such experiences. For example, Amanda Lusk, a social studies teacher at Herman L. Horn Elementary School in Vinton, VA, organized for her students to videoconference with a scientist who was working on several projects in Antarctica in order to learn more about the continent's geography and the type of work being done there. During the conference call, students received a live view of the research station where the scientist even walked her laptop outside to show views of the Antarctica's harsh environment (McCrea, 2012).

Students can learn about problems from different perspectives via videoconferencing which can help students move further along the GCE spectrum of understanding characteristics such as *value* and *morality*. While an intranational example, fourth grade students in two Texas counties partnered with their guest experts, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Wildlife Association, to provide students with a greater understanding of a local river basin. The two schools were located on the opposite ends of the river. The students, from both classes, studied water quality over a two month period and had several videoconferencing sessions with the guest experts from the field to enhance their knowledge of the water quality. Students, from the two schools, also used Skype to compare, contrast, and review their notes on conservation along the river basin (Hopper, 2014).

Guest speakers have long brought new perspectives to schools, but videoconferencing can expand the range of accessible guests from across the globe. Richardson, Fox, & Lehman (2012) explained how videoconferencing can be used to bring in guest speakers in higher education. At the authors' MidWestern university, college of education faculty videoconferenced with guest speakers who demonstrated uses of the medium and discussed their experiences videoconferencing with university students in a myriad of other countries. Schools and universities have brought in Holocaust survivors (Ross, 2010), Chinese students to teach about puppetry arts (Russell-Fry, n.d.), and a world traveler to update students on his journey (Quillen, 2004). Numerous organizations and museums facilitate videoconference opportunities for classes that allow for growth in *humane treatment* by bringing the experiences people have gone through to life. In 2016, the United Nations hosted its eighth annual "Remember Slavery Global Student Videoconference" day which linked "high school students at United Nations Headquarters in New York to their counterparts in Dakar, Senegal, and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago" (n.p.). In another

example, the Museum of Tolerance (n.d.) in Los Angeles hosts a program called “Bridging the Gap” whereby special speakers (e.g., Holocaust survivors, hate crime victim and perpetrator) present one hour lectures and answer questions. In 2008, “the MOT partnered with LAUSD to connect Los Angeles students with peers in Baku, Azerbaijan, and with the Constitutional Rights Foundation to connect local students with youths in Russia and Lithuania” (n.p.). Finally, the Digital Human Library is a nonprofit organization that connects teachers and students, particularly those in Canada, with organizations and experts around the world who offer interactive curriculum-based opportunities for learning using technology (Learn more at <https://www.digitalhumanlibrary.org/>).

### **Operational Considerations**

Educators must research and practice using any new technologies before utilizing them in class to ensure that class activities run smoothly. Fortunately, gradual technological improvements in videoconferencing services have made it easier for teachers to overcome hurdles and shorten the learning curve. However, there are still pre-planning items educators should consider. For example, videoconferencing requires a high Internet bandwidth, compatible browsers or operating systems, and appropriate and updated videoconferencing services. Teachers must also be mindful of organizational constraints concerning room set-up, background noise, and participants’ proximity to the camera and mic. For example, videoconference participants usually benefit from being close to the camera and microphone, rather than being sprawled across an entire classroom. This allows more participants to be seen and heard. For listening and talking, it is best to mute the microphone if not talking to get eliminate background noise. Additionally, teachers should complete trials runs prior to the initial videoconferencing. Finally, educators should have a secondary method for contacting the other participants (e.g., instant messaging, text message) in the event of technical problems or delays. For a more complete list of suggested preparation guidelines see Table 1.

Table 1

Videoconferencing Preparation Suggestions



Based on the literature and our own classroom videoconferencing collaboration experiences, the following list offers teachers suggestions that can help them set up successful videoconferencing activities.

1. Know district and school policies for videoconferencing and guest speakers (Ferriter, n.d.; McCrea, 2012).
2. Gain parental permissions (Richardson, Fox, & Lehman, 2012).
3. Outline objectives and ground rules (Gill, Parker, & Richardson, 2005; Richardson, Fox, & Lehman, 2012).
4. Check stability of Internet connections (Gill, Parker, & Richardson, 2005; Journell & Dressman, 2011; McCrea, 2012; Camardese & Peled, 2014).
5. Complete practice runs with the other class and own class before beginning (Gill, Parker, & Richardson, 2005; Richardson, Fox, & Lehman, 2012; Camardese & Peled, 2014).
6. Have tech support available during the videoconferencing collaboration (Beauchamp, 2011; Richardson, Fox, & Lehman, 2012; Camardese & Peled, 2014).
7. Have a backup plan (e.g., synchronous chat in Facebook messenger) in case of technical difficulties (Gill, Parker, & Richardson, 2005; Journell & Dressmann, 2011).
8. If using a guest speaker, prep the speaker, have interview questions pre-arranged that are possibly designed and asked by the students (Ferriter, n.d.; McCrea, 2012).
9. Consider time differences if doing an international videoconferencing collaboration (Hilburn & Maguth, 2012).
10. Provide students with continuous feedback and reflection in addition to time for evaluation during and inbetween videoconferencing sessions (Gill, Parker, & Richardson, 2005). This time is critical for students to critically analyze and gain a deeper understanding of cultural similarities and differences and their own evolving understandings. It is also an evaluative time that can help both teachers and students gain insights about what can improve the collaboration.

### **Implications for Practice and Research**

We know that in an era of standardized testing and accountability, social studies educators often face pressures to cover discrete and testable facts about people, places, and events (Houser, Krutka, Roberts, Pennington, & Coerver, 2016). However, we believe that personal interactions can help students gain the types of humanizing experiences to better interact as cosmopolitan

citizens across cultural, linguistic, or national borders (Banks, 2008). By analyzing the literature and identifying three primary purposes for videoconferencing for GCE, we hope educators can gain insights into determining what might be appropriate in their settings. Of course, wise application of videoconferencing requires understanding your students, community, and technology. We believe the examples in this manuscript make a strong case for why social studies educators should consider integrating videoconferencing into their classes and teachers and scholars alike should research videoconferencing for GCE.

*Intercultural experiences, intercultural projects, and learning about cultures* each offer specific aims that tend to highlight specific GCE characteristics. While *intercultural experiences* offer more opportunities for the development of humanizing relationships, we believe there are a number of ways educators could supplement *intercultural projects* and *learning about cultures* with more opportunities for intercultural immersion. For example, a teacher could enhance collaborative *intercultural projects* by setting aside non-videoconferencing time for project reflection activities with students. During this reflection time, away from their cross-cultural peers, students will be free to share thoughts on the project, suggest ways to improve it, and clarify any cultural misunderstandings or ambiguities. Such dialogues could further alleviate cultural misconceptions and allow teachers and students an opportunity to deepen cross-cultural dialogue during the subsequent videoconference sessions. Similarly, lessons with the primary aim of *learning about cultures* could include more *intercultural experiences* by allowing students to ask questions during, before, or after the videoconference, or by inviting in other people or perspectives to the lesson. Moreover, videoconferencing experiences can help students grow as global citizens if teachers implicitly and explicitly focus on achieving GCE characteristics (Gaudelli, 2009) in videoconference activities.

Videoconferencing for global citizenship education requires teacher intentionality and quality pedagogy. For example, in an effort to help students take informed action in resolving possible conflicts, which is an underlying aspect of Gaudelli's (2009) *value* GCE dimension, teachers might videoconference with an expert on climate change and take students on a virtual field trip of Glacier National Park, an area greatly affected by climate change. This activity could be supported through other activities like students studying past and present photos of the region along with other primary and secondary sources. This analysis could dovetail class dialogues about practicing and encouraging sustainable patterns of living, consumption and production. Students

might even engage in a cross-cultural service learning project on climate change with students from other countries through iEARN or ePALS (see Table 2 for more Videoconferencing and global project-based websites).

## Table 2

### Videoconferencing and Global Project-based Websites

The following organizations have a history of providing online classroom exchange opportunities. While not all the sites advertise videoconferencing collaboration, they do provide opportunities for teachers to make global classroom connections, which can lead into using videoconferencing as one of the mediums.

- The Centre for Global Education (<http://tcge.tiged.org/>): The mission of The Centre for Global Education (TCGE) is to educate 21st Century students for a 21st Century world by providing global learning opportunities. The Global Encounters program brings together students from across the world through live video conferences that explore global issues and the potential youth have to shape a better common future. Each interdisciplinary, project-based Encounter has a specially designed TIG Virtual Classroom, to foster asynchronous student collaboration. Furthermore, a team of global expert mentors is recruited for each session, to provide students with authentic and timely feedback on their online postings. (*Grades 7-12*)
- Digital Human Library (dHL; <https://www.digitalhumanlibrary.org/>): The Digital Human Library was founded in 2011 by Canadian teacher Leigh Cassell. dHL is a nonprofit organization that connects teachers and students, particularly those in Canada, with organizations and experts around the world who offer interactive curriculum-based opportunities for learning using technology. dHL also runs Connected Learning Partnerships (#CLPedu) with the aim of creating *opportunities* for connections-based learning by establishing partnerships with teachers and schools in other countries around the world.
- ePALS Classroom Exchange ([www.epals.com](http://www.epals.com)): Connecting more than 108,000 classrooms in more than 190 countries with school-safe e-mail, ePALS markets itself as the Internet's largest global education community of collaborative classrooms engaged in cross-cultural exchanges and project sharing. (*Grades K-12*)

- Generation Global (<http://generation.global/>): Previously Face to Faith, based with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, this global program allows students to interact with their global peers. Generation Global provides global learning and student-to-student dialogue opportunities to gain global citizenships skills. Support for teachers includes training, professional development videoconferences, and support delivery. (*12-17 year olds*)
- Global Classroom Project (<https://theglobalclassroomproject.org/>): The Global Classroom Project supports a vibrant online collaborative community and global education network, helping to empower teachers and students around the world to explore new ways to connect, share, learn and collaborate globally. (*Grades K-12*)
- Global Nomads Group (<http://gng.org/>): Global Nomads Group is a non-profit organization that uses interactive technologies such as videoconferencing to increase children's understanding of the world and its cultures. Middle and high school youth collaborate face-to-face across cultural and national boundaries to discuss world issues and their personal differences and similarities.
- Global Schoolnet (<http://www.globalschoolnet.org/>): Global Schoolnet offers a long list of projects that allow classrooms from around the world to work together online. A highlight of the site is the Projects Registry, a database of school Internet projects that teachers can use to search for collaborative projects to join. Schools can also submit a project of their own. The projects can be searched by age level, start date, curriculum area, technologies used, collaboration types used, and keyword.
- International Education and Resource Network (iEARN; [www.iearn.org](http://www.iearn.org)): This organization is a nonprofit global network made up of more than 30,000 schools in more than 140,000 countries. Teachers and students collaborate via the Internet on projects that fit their curricula and increase international understanding.
- Kidlink (<http://www.kidlink.org/>): Kidlink has over 100 public and private conferencing communities for youths, teachers, and parents in over 30 languages. Since its start in 1990, over 110,000 kids from more than 120 countries have participated. Their primary means of communication is via e-mail, but real-time interactions with web-based dialogs and video conferencing are also used.
- Schools Online (<https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/>): Schools Online has a database for schools looking to partner with other schools worldwide to develop international

education projects. It is managed by the British Council, but it is open to schools worldwide.

- Skype in the Classroom (<https://education.microsoft.com/skype-in-the-classroom/>): Skype in the Classroom is an online community that enables thousands of teachers to inspire the next generation of global citizens through transformative learning through (a) Skype lessons with experts or peers, (b) playing Mystery Skype with another classroom, (c) virtual field trips, or (d) guest speakers.
- TakingItGlobal (<http://www.tigweb.org/>): TakingItGlobal has served over 4,500 schools in over 145 countries. The organization offers a free online classroom platform for use in developing collaborative global projects with other classrooms.
- For more, the Digital Human Library has an excellent page with recommended organizations global connections: <https://www.digitalhumanlibrary.org/teachers/global-connections-for-teachers-and-students/>

Videoconferencing has the potential to support the aims GCE, but there is no guarantee that such purposes will be achieved. Educators should ensure that sessions are pedagogically sound and fit educational aims. For example, students are likely to find sessions that solely consist of lecture with slides without questions or interactions as unstimulating as this will fail to take advantage of the interactive possibilities with videoconferencing. When Lee (2007) conducted a case study on the use of videoconferencing to connect 7<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. students with international university students, Lee (2007) identified pedagogical shortcomings. While the teacher's instructional goal was to expose students to other cultures and learn about countries via guest speakers, findings indicated that videoconferences with these "country experts" resulted in the deepening stereotypes of other cultures. This was at least partially due to the teacher's lack of exposure to these cultures and experience with an intercultural videoconferencing pedagogy. Teachers should also be cognizant the personal biases and misconceptions they bring to any project.

Finally, researchers can support teachers in their uses of videoconferencing for GCE by delving into the topic. Currently, there is a dearth of scholarly literature on the topic and many questions need to be answered. For example, do videoconferencing interactions lead to shifts in student thinking beyond the single project? How does coursework support issues related to cross

cultural learning and global citizenship? There are no surveys of why teachers and teacher educators in the social studies choose to use (or not use) videoconferencing. Identifying reasons why teachers do not use videoconferencing technologies can help identify necessary supports for teachers to utilize videoconferencing technologies. Moreover, rich case studies of how and why teachers utilize videoconferences, like the ones we have detailed in this paper, can help teachers imagine possibilities appropriate to their settings. We believe teachers, teacher educators, and researchers all have much they can learn from each other as they investigate how videoconferencing through intercultural experiences, intercultural projects, and learning about cultures can support the aims of global citizenship education.

### **Conclusion**

We believe that educators have only begun to tap into the potential benefits of videoconferencing for GCE. More than ever, we are all connected as many local problems are global and global problems are local. Whether we aim to address environmental concerns, reduce prejudice, or pursue specific projects to make a better world, videoconferencing can transcend geographic boundaries and provide an impetus for action. When students can listen to, and see, peers from across the world share their perspectives, challenges, and hopes, they can grow as global citizens who understand issues in new ways. When used well, videoconferencing allows students a passport around the world, opens their eyes to their place in it, and their responsibility to care for the earth and each other.

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