

Rethinking 'Cosmopolitanism' as an Analytic for the Comparative Study of Globalization and Education

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This article proposes that for scholars in comparative and international education the study of "cosmopolitanisms" offers a productive avenue for thinking outside of the traditional paradigms of area studies and for understanding the new world-generating optics and multi-layered geographies that appear to be emerging with globalization. The piece explores the concept of "vernacular cosmopolitanisms" and discusses recent scholarship – on 21st century American education and on early-20th-century Yugoslav education – that have used cosmopolitanism as an analytic category. The article argues that studying actually, existing cosmopolitanisms is a useful strategy for examining the ways that solidarities are formed, identities are developed, and principles of inclusion and exclusion are elaborated amidst local and global assemblages.

One of the key analytic challenges that globalization presents is the need to develop social science research strategies appropriate to understanding emergent social, political and cultural forms. In this article I argue that the study of *cosmopolitanisms* offers a productive avenue for thinking outside of the traditional paradigms of area studies and for understanding the new world-generating optics and multi-layered geographies that appear to be emerging with globalization. These new, often non-territorial configurations bring people, knowledge, institutions, and objects together in novel and sometimes surprising assemblages. These are the social spaces within which educational issues increasingly take their shape, thus prompting a need for comparative education researchers to rethink their methods and conceptual tools. My suggestion is that one strategy (among numerous possibilities) to address this situation is to take up the study of 'cosmopolitanisms.'

I am not suggesting that scholars of comparative and international education examine the various ways that cosmopolitanism as an intellectual ethic descends from European Enlightenment and earlier thinkers – where it is typically seen as a paradigmatic alternative to the national organization of civic/political allegiances. Instead, I suggest that we turn our gaze to actually existing cosmopolitanisms and focus on a variety of actually existing practical stances. Following an argument advanced by Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo (2005), I would maintain that the term "transnationalism" – while useful for referring generally to movements that cross national boundaries – is inadequate for describing the positioning of self and community amidst local and global assemblages that we can get a purchase on by making use of the concept of cosmopolitanism. I would propose that we can think, for example, about "vernacular cosmopolitanisms" such as "Islamic cosmopolitanism," "Chinese cosmopolitanism," and "Slavic cosmopolitanism." Each instance is homologous in that each cosmopolitanism involves a historically specific set of techniques for living and forming solidarities outside the local, as well as strategies for knowing forms of belonging connected with estrangement, displacement, and/or distance from the immediate local.

While the global diffusion of images and media is often credited with opening up the potential of a "global imagination," too often the role of schooling is overlooked in this and similar processes. In numerous settings around the globe, cosmopolitan dispositions and commitments are thoroughly

enmeshed in the curricular and pedagogic practices of modern schooling. This is not to make the argument that cosmopolitanisms are structurally part of any "grammar" of schooling. Rather, it is to suggest that researchers of comparative and international education might productively focus on the culturally and historically varying ways in which schools produce versions of the cosmopolitan child as a future citizen. At the same time, attention must be paid to its opposite, the future citizen who is trapped in circuits of exclusion for not being sufficiently progressive, worldly, and global-minded.

Vernacular and Actually Existing Cosmopolitanisms

My purpose here is not to advocate for cosmopolitan orientations or to contribute to any emerging consensus that curricula and schools ought to be more cosmopolitan. In the conclusion of this piece I will take up the question of what positive, normative vision is embedded in the research strategy I am proposing. However, the first order of business is to elaborate on what is meant by the concept of "actually existing cosmopolitanisms" and to provide a definition of the seemingly oxymoronic concept of a "vernacular cosmopolitanism."

The proposition that we can loosen cosmopolitanism from its Kantian and European Enlightenment moorings has a number of analytic implications. One of these is to locate the present project in scholarly circles, which maintain that universals are inevitably articulated from particular perspectives. This can be advanced as at once an epistemological and an empirical argument, noteworthy versions of which are becoming increasingly prevalent in anthropological circles (Geertz, 2000; Shweder, 1989). In this intellectual paradigm, one of the challenges of analysis is to understand how 'particular' systems of reasoning come to appear as 'universal.' A second implication is that what I am proposing here can be seen as allied with the 'provincializing Europe' thrust of post-colonial studies. Dipesh Chakrabarty usefully points out that identifying European universals as culturally-specific is not an adequate analysis – one must additionally seek to document how such 'reason' has become 'obvious' in the ways that it has (Chakrabarty, 1992, pp. 20-21; 2000, p. 43). This kind of post-colonial analysis denaturalizes concepts (e.g. 'citizenship', 'politics') that historically have been held to be abstractions that transcend boundaries of time and place. One goal of this current of analysis would be to show these as 'provincial' projects that are, in fact, bound by time and place. For example, when Immanuel Kant was proposing a world political community grounded in cosmopolitan right in the 1780s and 1790s, it is significant that he was writing at a time of transition from feudal to capitalist modes of production. Kant argued that increasingly globalized international commerce was the historical condition and an *already existing model* for the cosmopolitical community he envisioned. Also worth noting – because so much has been made of the cosmopolitan/national binary – is that Kant's cosmopolitan project was in fact presented in opposition not to nationalism but to statism, something that again speaks to the particular political and social contexts in which 'Enlightenment cosmopolitanism' was articulated (Cheah, 1998, pp. 22-27).

An influential piece on cosmopolitanism by Sheldon Pollock, Homi Bhabha, Carol Breckenridge and Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) proposes that it be considered a historical category "not pre-given or foreclosed by the definition of any particular society or discourse" (Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge, & Chakrabarty, 2000, pp. 577-578). The suggestion in their work is that we can productively think of multiple cosmopolitanisms. Certainly, there are other scholars who would disagree with this contention, for example by pointing to the continuity and integrity of certain key elements (for example, having to do with membership and identity) as they develop in a body of texts whose authors were in conversation with one another (see, e.g., Pagden, 2000). All the same, the position taken in this article is that the social fields in which we can examine cosmopolitanism are enough

crowded, disjointed, and episodic as to preclude a single intellectual genealogy.

The proposal here is that regardless of whether the term 'cosmopolitan' is used in particular settings or not, there are instances in which it is a useful analytic descriptor for research purposes. In this, I am concerning myself less with an "institutionalized system of cosmopolitan governance" and more with "cosmopolitan attitudes," or, put differently, "cosmopolitanism as a way of being in the world" (Appiah, 2006; Waldron, 1995). This is also to speak of cosmopolitanism more in its cultural and civic dimensions. In this vein, I would propose that it can be useful to stipulate two key features that might allow comparative education researchers to "recognize" a vernacular cosmopolitanism:

1. Viewed as a question of identity and identity formation, a cosmopolitanism concerns self-definition in relation to and in relationship with the world beyond one's immediate local conditions.
2. Viewed as a form of political action, a cosmopolitanism can be seen as a strategy for locating self and community amidst local and global formations.

Cosmopolitanism in Relation to Schooling

As the previous discussion starts to suggest, concepts of cosmopolitanism ricochet around academic literature these days. Above I have discussed what one might mean by a 'vernacular cosmopolitanism;' in this section I elaborate on the ways that cosmopolitanisms figure as educational questions.

There is, appropriately, a normative way of interrogating cosmopolitanism in political philosophy that looks, for example, at categories and definitions of world citizenship, universality, human rights and the like. Notions of cosmopolitanism are also used by scholars such as David Held (1995) to examine the idea of a global democracy based on liberal conceptions of human rights. Martha Nussbaum (1996) has perhaps done the most significant work in translating this kind of discourse into concrete educational recommendations and visions. She makes strong arguments for educating children with a sense of world citizenship and an allegiance to a global humanity; and, she has proposed humanities-based curricular projects designed to nurture ideal, cosmopolitan citizens who can rise above their national patriotisms. Nussbaum's challenge has been taken up by a number of educational theorists (see, e.g., Donald, 2007; Hansen, 2008; Papastephanou, 2002).

In the post-9/11 environment, the possibilities of normative cosmopolitanism have shifted in some intriguing ways. Katharyne Mitchell (2007) has pointed out that former US President George W. Bush embraced international education programs within a cosmopolitan idiom that emphasizes communicating with and understanding others who are different from ourselves. With programs such as the National Strategic Language Initiative, we are seeing the emergence of what Mitchell usefully terms "strategic cosmopolitanism" – or, "cosmopolitan learning in service of the national interest" (p. 709). Strategic cosmopolitanism extends beyond the kinds of "global competencies" that the US Department of Defense prizes and of which it is in desperate need. It also intersects with a neoliberal vision where learning about others is less for purposes of multicultural tolerance and more motivated by ideas of 'global competitiveness' and the need to fashion individuals who can rapidly adapt to shifting national and international contexts (Mitchell, 2003).

Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism (which can be referred to as an ethical cosmopolitanism) follows

in the Kantian tradition of articulating a “regulative ideal” – a governing principle that sets forth an absolute ideal of the good (Stoddard & Cornwell, 2003). In an analogous manner, neoliberal strategic cosmopolitanism in the US is regulative in its ambition to specify sets of proper individual behaviors, dispositions, and proficiencies. Over the past several years, this ‘regulative’ dimension of cosmopolitanism has been seized up on by a group of educational researchers who analyze cosmopolitan educational imperatives as a form of ‘governmentality’ (e.g., Hultqvist & Dahlberg, 2001; Popkewitz, Olsson, & Petersson, 2006). As is well known, the term was coined by the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1978 / 2000) to describe a terrain of analysis that centered on the arts of governing. In the simplest terms, governmentality refers to the way techniques of governing become enshrined in modes of thought. To examine cosmopolitanism in this manner is to examine a set of practices and rationalities that far exceeds the boundaries of institutions and political philosophies and extends well into the social administration of individuals, families and communities. Popkewitz, Olsson and Petersson (2006) state that they,

are interested in the rules and standards of conduct in producing the self-governing actors who are simultaneously responsible for the social progress and for ... personal fulfillment. (p. 433)

They then propose that,

Cosmopolitanism ... provides a way to examine the system of reason that regulates, differentiates and divides the acts and participation of the child in the name of universal human principles such as the Learning Society. (p. 433)

For these scholars, then, cosmopolitanism goes beyond attachment to things non-local; it references the principles and norms that are bound up in how children are taught to think about humanness in local and global dimensions.

Two Instances of Governing Cosmopolitanisms

To illustrate the ways that comparative education scholars can analyze particular, actual cosmopolitanisms I will discuss two instances of the culturally and historically varying ways that schools seek to produce a cosmopolitan child as a future citizen. The first draws on my own historical scholarship on the particular notions of worldliness and extra-local forms of self-identification that Yugoslav schools sought to produce in the 1920s and 1930s. The second example is of the “new cosmopolitanism” that is being expressed in contemporary American educational reform through the vision of – and the work done to create – “lifelong learners.” Here I rely on scholarship by Thomas Popkewitz who proposes that the “universalization” of this new mode of cosmopolitanism creates a schema for exclusion and disablement even as it valorizes inclusiveness and participation.

Yugoslavia came into existence with the territorial reorganizations that accompanied the end of the First World War. With political sovereignty came the mandate to fabricate “Yugoslavs” through a unified school system. The Yugoslav project was frequently attached to a larger project of Slavic integration and notions of Pan-Slavism circulated widely. In a recent book (Sobe, 2008) I have argued that for Yugoslavs in the interwar era, the “Slavic world” served as a space for cosmopolitan identity work to such an extent that it is appropriate to discuss “Slavic cosmopolitanism” as one of the important regulative ideals circulating in and through the educational system.

In the 1920s and 1930s Czechoslovakia was the most important reference point for Yugoslavs actively seeking to modernize social institutions and cultural behaviors. Both Yugoslav teachers and students traveled to Czechoslovakia in significant numbers, “importing” lessons and bringing examples back home that – on the basis of notions about Slavic kinship, coequality, and reciprocity (*uzajamnost*) – were seen as uniquely appropriate for the Yugoslav context/project (Sobe, 2005a, 2005b, 2006). This practice of using Czechoslovakia to think about “modern” modes of living and social organization extended into the Yugoslav school through curricular mandates that valorized Czechoslovak “heroes” such as Jan Hus and Tomas Masaryk. Yugoslav children were also to take part in celebrating Czechoslovak national holidays and to participate in a form of Slavic gymnastics (“sokoling”) that had been pioneered in Prague. Yugoslavia’s attraction to Czechoslovakia was part of envisioning a Slavic world and forms of belonging that exceeded and surpassed local conditions and local constraints. In an uncanny presaging of the educational harmonization efforts underway in Europe at present, in 1927 a Yugoslav-Czechoslovak inter-parliamentary commission proposed that school laws and regulations in the two countries be coordinated, diplomas be recognized, and Czechoslovak and Yugoslav students be permitted to study freely in one another’s countries at both the tertiary and secondary level. To be sure, this vision of Slavic integration and cooperation was never realized to the extent for which it was called. Nonetheless, it helps to illustrate the “cosmopolitical” significance of interwar Yugoslavia’s “Slavic” interests and activities.

The Slavic cosmopolitanism that can be seen in Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s is very clearly a vernacular cosmopolitanism. It was, to use Arjun Appaduri’s words, “a world-generating optic” (2000, p. 8). While the world that was being envisioned did not encompass the terrestrial globe, it did propose its own form of universal reason and locate self and community betwixt and between local and global formations. And, it did specify a host of behaviors, dispositions and modes of thought that were considered ‘proper’ for the ideal Yugoslav. At the same time, those who were able to properly attach themselves to this social world in formation were disqualified, excluded and pathologized as outside the realm of the reasonable. In interwar Yugoslavia, the list of those who were deemed not ‘worldly’ enough could include strident ethnic nationalists, Roma, and the tradition-bounded peasantry.

Looking at a substantially different setting, Thomas Popkewitz in a 2008 book discusses the “new cosmopolitanism” that has begun to emerge in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century. This new cosmopolitan “is spoken about in universal terms” and is manifested as “the lifelong learner who acts as the global citizen” (p. 112). In Popkewitz’s account, this new cosmopolitanism is saturated with myths of participation and inclusion that help to undergird its pretensions to universality. He points to the rhetoric of the 2002 “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation as creating “a space of mystical participation in a common good that, in fact, differentiates and divides” (p. 112). In Popkewitz’s argument, the “inclusionary project” that is carried out through NCLB and numerous other contemporary American educational initiatives postulates an ‘all children’ that is much more about sameness than diversity or difference. The contemporary American child as a future citizen is to live in the mode of the lifelong learner who possesses “self-responsibility in making choices, problem solves, works collaboratively, and continually innovates” (p. 163). This mode of life is to be universalized and made open to “all.” Yet, simultaneously, it becomes the standard against which ‘all children’ are measured, classified, and differentiated.

The normalization of the characteristics of the ‘lifelong learner’ leads Popkewitz (2008) to refer to the regulative cosmopolitanism that is entering the educational arena as one calibrated on

producing an “unfinished cosmopolitan.” The new cosmopolitanism is ‘unfinished’ because “the lifelong learner lives in a continuous course of personal responsibility,” and inhabits a world where “life is now thought of in segments of time where quick actions are required to meet the challenges of new conditions and where nothing seems solid or stable” (p. 119). This contrasts with the cosmopolitan vernacular that Popkewitz describes as prevalent in US educational circles a century earlier. Early 20th-century American cosmopolitanism engineered the child to fix problems and reduce uncertainty in the name of democratic ideals and within the social public sphere (p. 45-109). In the early 21st century, the problem-solving individual has the capacity and responsibility to work across multiple domains and within multiple kinds of “communities,” none of which have clear sets of boundaries.

Contemporary “unfinished” American cosmopolitanism starkly contrasts with this earlier American cosmopolitanism in its dividing and differentiating mechanisms. At the turn of the 20th century, individuals were organized in relation to a social whole that gained its definition because of a given “national ethos” or on the basis of so-called “civilizational” values. These formed the criteria that qualified and disqualified certain kinds of people. Increasingly, according to Popkewitz (2008), divisions occur at a different level. Comparisons are made less and less among people in terms of where they stand in relation to a quintessential ‘American-ness’ or in relation to ‘American values.’ Rather, Popkewitz argues that “comparativeness operates at the micro level, related to the particular lifestyles, choices, and problem solving organized in collaborative communities” (2008, p. 113). Here it is evident that in Popkewitz’s scholarship ‘cosmopolitanism’ captures a process of the globalization and universalization of categories and forms of reason, in addition to indexing particular ways of being in the world.

Conclusion

In this piece I have tried to present an argument that looking at ‘cosmopolitanisms’ seems a well-matched analytic tool for critically approaching the “collapsing of distances,” the broadening of the “outlines of communities”, and the reframing of the sources of individual and social selves that are claimed to accompany the globalization of today. In addition to looking at contemporary instances, comparative education scholars can also productively examine different historical instances of actually existing vernacular cosmopolitanisms.

As I stated at the outset, my purpose here has not been to advocate for or against any particular kind of cosmopolitan orientation. Yet, I do take some inspiration from the late Jacques Derrida who in a 1999 lecture before the International Parliament of Writers, and in reference to that group’s efforts to create “cities of refuge,” asked the question: “where have we received the image of cosmopolitanism from?” (2001, p. 3). Derrida included in his talk a discussion of cosmopolitanism as it moves through Stoic, Pauline, and Kantian thought. Neither interwar Yugoslav Slavic cosmopolitanism, nor new American unfinished cosmopolitanism fully completes the possible range of images of cosmopolitanism that human societies have produced and are continuing to produce. As the above examples illustrate, there is both danger and promise in cosmopolitanisms. There is much more about cosmopolitanisms that comparative and international education research can tell us.

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