Toward Enacted Cosmopolitan Citizenship: New Conceptualizations of African Immigrants’ Civic Learning and Action in the United States

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ABSTRACT: The rapid growth of African residents in the U.S. currently shapes global civil society and calls for rethinking global identities and notions of global citizenship. This paper presents findings from a qualitative, interpretive case study on the civic learning and action of second- and 1.5-generation African immigrants in New York, U.S.A. We consider how African immigrants are constructing an understanding of their civic learning and action, and conceptualize an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship to better understand their civic engagement involving social justice issues in the U.S. and globally. We examine African immigrants’ enacted cosmopolitan citizenship across two intersecting themes: 1) identities/attachments within and across local and global communities and 2) enactments within and across local and global communities. We build upon theories of cosmopolitanism to extend understandings of an action-oriented global worldview of cosmopolitan citizenship, and point to implications for enacting new conceptualizations of citizenship and civic participation in global societies.

Introduction

Unprecedented demographic changes, during a time of vast expansion and global, technological, economic, political, and social interactions engender the rethinking of global identities and re-conceptualizing notions of citizenship (Banks, 2009). Between 1990 and 2005 an estimated 17 million immigrants entered the United States (Rong & Preissle, 2009). African immigrants in the U.S. contribute to these demographic shifts, with a population increased by 40% between 2000 and 2005, increasing the total immigrant population from multiple African nations to 1.2 million residents (Rong & Preissle,
This rapid growth of African residents in the U.S. shapes and continues to be shaped by global civil society. Therefore, it becomes especially important to understand how African immigrants construct an understanding of their civic learning and action in the context of an interconnected world, and how those understandings intersect with notions of cosmopolitanism citizenship. As a result, these intersections help us better understand African immigrants’ civic engagement involving issues of social justice in the U.S. and globally.

This paper presents findings from a qualitative, interpretive case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) on the civic learning and action of second- and 1.5-generation African immigrant youth and young adults (Flanagan & Levine, 2010) in New York, U.S.A. Second-generation U.S.-born immigrants are individuals with at least one foreign-born parent, and 1.5-generation immigrants arrived in the U.S. between ages 6 and 12 (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). Conceptual and theoretical understandings of cosmopolitanism have provided a framework for understanding citizenship and civic education in a global society (Appiah, 1997; Hansen, 2010; Nussbaum, 1996). Yet, few empirical studies have situated contexts and practices of cosmopolitan citizenship within notions of global civic learning, experiences, and actions (Mitchell & Parke, 2008; Osler, 2010; Osler & Starkey, 2003). We argue that African immigrant participants’ experiences present a framework for enacted cosmopolitan citizenship, building upon and extending theories of cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 1997; Nussbaum, 1996), cosmopolitan on the ground (Hansen, 2010), and cosmopolitan citizenship (Osler, 2010). We conceptualize an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship to demonstrate an orientation toward the world that is: 1) situated in African immigrants’ identities; 2) rooted in everyday experiences; 3) encompassing local/national/global perspectives; and 4) revealing a commitment to social justice in an action-taking for the benefit of the global community of human beings. Specifically, African immigrants’ experiences with and understandings of civic learning and action render visible how their enacted cosmopolitan citizenship challenges traditional notions of civic learning and action that go beyond civic engagement such as voting, jury duty, and volunteering, toward identities and actions situated in/with practices across the lifespan. African immigrants’ conceptualizations of civic learning and action speak to an understanding of social justice and active and engaged citizenship. We examine six of the twenty second- and 1.5-generation African immigrants participants’, ages 22 – 39, enacted cosmopolitan citizenship across two intersecting and interacting themes: 1) identities/attachments within and across local and global communities; and 2) enactments within and across local and global communities. We point to implications for enacting new conceptualizations of citizenship involving issues of social justice in global societies.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Framing an Enacted Cosmopolitan Citizenship across African Immigrants’ Orientations: Identities/Attachments and Enactments

In examining African immigrant participants’ enacted cosmopolitan citizenship, we constructed a theoretical/conceptual framework that interweaves social science and education research literature on cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan citizenship, traditional notions of citizenship, and civic learning and action in some traditional African societies. An enacted cosmopolitan citizenship emerges from African immigrants’ orientations, situated within and across two tenets – identities/attachments within and across local and global communities, and enactments of global civic learning, experiences
and actions within and across local and global communities. We conceptualize orientations as a state of mind and being, an attitudinal and physical inclination, and a positioning of oneself toward enacted cosmopolitan citizenship (Hansen, 2010).

**Identities and attachments: Moving beyond the nation state**

Constructions of cosmopolitanism, both philosophical and empirical, challenge traditional notions of citizenship focused on civic learning and action in which one remains loyal to the nation-state. Within this tenet, we discuss how orientations of identities and attachments toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship emerge as: 1.) unbound to the nation-state and loyal to a more inclusive shared, global space for all humanity (Nussbaum, 1996); 2.) thereby open to new learning, but rooted in what one already knows based on local, community, and everyday lived experiences (Appiah, 1997; Hansen, 2010); and 3.) building a concern for and obligation to the global community based on a shared human experience and sense of belonging (El-Haj, 2007; Osler & Starkey, 2003) (See Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Orientations Toward Identities/Attachments of an Enacted Cosmopolitan Citizenship](image)

Considering African immigrant participants’ identities and attachments involves examining ways in which their responsibilities as citizens emerge as unbound from the nation-state, navigating complicated identities as members of a local, national, and global community of human beings (Nussbaum, 1996; Osler, 2010). For example, Nussbaum (1994) articulates a notion of identities in which
a cosmopolitan education supports youth learning about what it means to be a citizen of a world of human beings or opening up “pathway[s] to cross-cultural encounters” (Papastephanou, 2002, p. 70). This citizen of the world, according to Papastephanou (2002) sees “equality, compassion, democracy, and care” (p. 69), as ideals, and a cosmopolitan education that seeks to prepare youth for such an ideal society. The preparation for global citizenship, according to Nussbaum (2002), occurs both through basic coursework or a liberal arts education, as well as through an interdisciplinary curriculum that includes the “infusion of world-citizenship perspectives” (p. 296). The latter element develops an affective dimension to education wherein one is “reading about others’ lives.” Such a stance taking is critical to developing “principles of tolerance and acceptance of otherness” to humans all over the world (Papeshaphanou, 2002, p. 71). The tension, however, as raised by Papestaphanou states that the teaching of these ideals are oriented toward the future, however the ideals themselves are understood in the past and present, and a cosmopolitan education seeks to navigate these tensions. Furthermore, according to Nussbaum (1996) learning takes place through acknowledging youth’s social and physical situatedness within their nation-state while developing attachments and commitments to a shared space in the world with citizens of other countries. Through cosmopolitan education: reflective learning takes place, examining oneself and one’s traditions (Papeshaphanou, 2002); international problems are solved; and moral obligations are established globally (Nussbaum, 1994).

A citizen who identifies with and possesses a worldview where one’s loyalty and allegiance is toward a shared space for all humanity becomes complicated by Hansen’s (2010) notions of a “cosmopolitan on the ground,” whereby an individual open to new learning acts simultaneously loyal to what they already know, such as their local, everyday experiences. Hansen further articulates that engagements with “on the ground” everyday experiences including cultures, religions, histories, or languages are juxtaposed with new or “alternative frames” of reference, such as people, places, or ideas. These new frames of reference support emerging identities and attachments as they raise inquiries regarding current global issues or problems affecting a larger society of individuals. This desire to learn, and the willingness to attach to someone or something that involves many cultures, people, or global issues, concerns, obligations, or movements toward social justice, supports orientations toward a cosmopolitan worldview. This unfolds everyday lives of youth, immigrants, and/or teachers, rather than solely business people or world travelers.

We situate reflecting on one’s orientation toward identities and attachments as connecting or feeling a sense of belonging (El-Haj, 2007; Mitchell & Parker, 2008) to particular spaces that are complicated by both what is known (for example, an individual’s global identities and everyday experiences) and what is unknown (for example, people who you have not yet met or cultures yet to be encountered). Such attachments further the enacting of cosmopolitan on the ground. For example, Appiah’s (1997) cosmopolitan patriot is “rooted” or attached “to a home of one’s own, with its own cultural particularities, but take[s] pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people” (p. 618). An enacted cosmopolitan citizenship involves connecting with local communities across the nation-state in order to engage with a community of individuals across global or cosmopolitan notions of community (Appiah, 1997).

The everyday lived experiences of youth who demonstrate a concern for and obligation to the global community based on a shared human experience and sense of belonging are addressed in few
empirical studies (Mitchell and Parker, 2008; Osler & Starkey, 2003). For instance, Osler and Starkey (2003), in their study of 600 youth in Leicester, U.K., showed how young people engage in civic learning and action by supporting local/community-based issues of inequity and injustice, such as bullying in their school or racism in surrounding neighborhoods. Specifically, the authors demonstrate how cosmopolitan citizens identify with a shared space for all humanity – the local/global community – while also holding an openness to learning about others they have not met yet. For example, a student in Osler and Starkey’s (2003) study offers his neighborhood’s street as an example of representing a wealth of cultural diversity and a place of learning about others stating, “there are many people living there, people of many cultures, religion and race. I like my street people and these many cultures which are fascinating” (p. 251). Although youth identify and attach to their local communities, they also see themselves as connected to communities outside of their own, either through friends, family, or neighbors from different countries or places; the same student above continued to explain, “you can learn more in life with many cultures surrounding you” (p. 251). These global identities and communities of belonging support an orientation toward identifying with multiple places, attaching to various issues and movements, and developing the knowledge and skills toward enacted cosmopolitan citizenship.

Across these studies, orientations toward identities and attachments in an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship involve educators seeing students as possessing an awareness of multiple citizenship identities including local/community-based, national, and global identities. An enacted cosmopolitan citizenship reconsidered how students express a desire to connect with and attach to these identities. Students’ situated identities involve a diversity of experiences located within and across multiple local, national, and global contexts. These contexts include sites of education, communities, and families. This (re)situating of youths’ citizenship identities and attachments involves contextualizing youths’ individual and/or local notions as not displaced, but rather possessing multiple identities constructed of and as citizens in a global worldview. Thus, identifying with a desire to connect takes place through a concern and obligation for a larger community of human beings.

**Enactments: Action toward peace and global human rights**

Enacted cosmopolitan citizenship moves toward actions regarding issues involving the larger community of human beings. Within this tenet, an orientation toward enacted cosmopolitan citizenship moves toward enactments as action toward global issues of peace and human rights through: 1.) framing a blend of particularly situated practices of civic learning experiences across the lifespan (Avoseh, 2001; Dei, 2008; Watson, Knight-Diop, & Bangura, 2010; Knight & Watson, 2014); and 2.) respecting diversity and promoting human rights for all groups by taking action involving global issues, such as injustice, equity, and human rights (Bromley, 2009; Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009; Osler & Starkey, 2003) (See Figure 2).
While few studies have examined actions involving orientations toward comopolitanism and cosmopolitan citizenship, notions of civic learning and action in traditional African societies frame an action-taking orientation of enactments. For example, in traditional African societies learning extends across a community-members’ lifespan through participating in religious, political, economic, cultural, and educational elements of the community (Avoseh, 2001; Dei, 2008; Knight, 2011; Watson, et al, 2010; Knight & Watson, 2014). Specifically, political participation in traditional African societies requires citizens to arrive at a decision that forefronts the community/national interests before individual concern. These decisions are made within the community’s marketplace or village center through a consensus of all who are in attendance (Avoseh, 2001). The literature on active citizenship in traditional African societies shows that moving toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship becomes intimately bound by one’s identities and focused on attaching to the larger community of human beings, and cannot take place without a strong desire to take action and make global change for all humanity. Cosmopolitan citizens’ ultimate goals are toward creating global peace, respecting diversity between human beings, and promoting equal rights for disparate groups (Bromley, 2009; Osler & Starkey, 2003). Enacted cosmopolitan citizenship operationalizes these goals within national boundaries yet provides opportunities for “discourse and action irrespective of boundaries” (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009: p. 2664). Cosmopolitan citizens recognize a shared humanity, a solidarity with others, clearly connected to and encompassing one’s current contexts and experiences by negotiating how to move this recognition toward action that is global in scope. For example, Osler and Starkey (2003) show how although the young

Figure 2. Orientations Toward Enactments of an Enacted Cosmopolitan Citizenship

Framing a blend of particularly situated practices of civic learning experiences across the lifespan

Respecting diversity and promoting human rights for all groups by taking action involving global issues, such as injustice, equity, and human rights

Enactments: Action toward peace and global human rights
people in their study were involved in local campaigns, such as saving a nearby school, they also felt a need to engage in fundraising efforts for earthquake victims in India or supporting the rights of refugee communities in their area. These examples of youth in the U.K. as well as in traditional African societies demonstrate that in order to acquire the knowledge, skills, and orientations of an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship, one might possess the social, physical, and intellectual orientations toward social justice issues including global peace and human rights, and engage in a desire to take action around these orientations. The orientations regarding taking action around issues of peace and human rights are reflected in African immigrants’ conceptions, commitments, and engagements of enacted cosmopolitan citizenship highlighted in this study.


**Methodology**

We chose a qualitative, interpretive case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to explore second- and 1.5-generation African immigrants’ educational experiences and civic participation. Qualitative research design uses inductive thinking to forefront how individuals give meaning in their own words to their experiences within and across contexts. Upon receiving approval to conduct the study by the university’s institutional review board, the research team documented how 20, second- and 1.5-generation African immigrant youth and young adults, ages 15 to 39, understand and experience civic learning and action, and how they are shaped, and shaping, civic learning and action in their local communities, the United States, and a multitude of global contexts and settings. Research questions included: 1. Who and what influences second- and 1.5-generation African immigrants’ civic learning and action within and across multiple contexts? 2. How are these influences shaping their civic learning and action and conceptions of citizenship? and 3. What are implications of learning and action for conceptualizing citizenship and social justice?

**Participants**

The primary participants consisted of a purposive sample of 20 West African immigrants, the largest segment of the African population in New York (Kent, 2007). The participants were recruited through personal contacts of two of the authors in educational institutions and community organizations, and a snowballing methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), whereby participants were asked to recommend additional participants. Seven of the 20 participants are 1.5-generation immigrants with the remaining being born in the United States, or second-generation. Second-generation immigrants are the U.S.-born children of at least one foreign-born parent; 1.5-generation are those arriving after the age of 6 and before the age of 12 (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). The bringing together of these populations allowed for comparison across populations that may co-exist in the same families, residency documentation, and
schooling experiences (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2002). The findings focus on 6 of the 20 participants who engaged notions of global learning and action that also compelled notions of enacted cosmopolitan citizenship (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name¹</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>African Country</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Citizenship Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chike</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ade</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection: Interviews

Primary data collection included one-on-one, 90-minute, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, with 20 participants from November 2008-October 2009. Semi-structured interviews are useful for studies of how people make sense of particular phenomena or experiences (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). Open-ended questions invited participants’ experiences and meaning-making of civic learning and action. For example, questions included: Can you describe a personal relationship in your schooling context that influenced your perceptions of civic and political participation? Can you talk about any of the extracurricular activities you participated in while in school? What courses in any part of your schooling have you taken that are related to civics and politics? Follow-up prompts utilized participants’ interpretations of civic learning and action in conversation with the research literature. For example: What was your participation like in those activities? Were any of the activities related to civic and political participation? Did you have any classes where you were able to discuss your racial, national, and/or cultural identity? Researchers took field notes and highlighted relevant issues and ideas for new questions.

Data Analysis

In case-study research (Stake, 1995) formal and informal data analysis is ongoing and iterative, enhancing the quality of researchers’ analyses and interpretations. Informal data analysis occurred during team meetings, when investigators discussed data and informally shared memos. We began to ask questions relating to participants' perspectives on civic learning and action and varied notions of citizenship including global, participatory, and justice-oriented citizenship. Data analysis was conducted through the use of grounded theory. Data was analyzed using Charmaz’s (2006) conception of constructivist grounded theory, an inductive, iterative approach to data analysis. We analyzed interview data for line-by-line codes, focus codes, and themes. After line-by-line coding five of the 20 interviews

¹ All participant names are pseudonyms.
based on participants’ own words, or invivo codes, we created focus codes based on patterns from the line-by-line coding. In considering reliability (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007), in reading remaining interviews, we continually returned to the initial interviews, adding and revising codes to reflect our ongoing analysis and reading of the literature on civic engagement and citizenship. From the focus codes, we identified themes, such as: braiding identity and loyalty to the larger world compelling action in the interest of the global community, and notions of identity and attachment to the global community.

As we begun to analyze data from the interviews, we found numerous occasions where participants held global orientations and connections to civic learning and action within various contexts. As we began to delve deeper into these moments in the data, we were led to further understanding how participants engaged with and challenging their involvement in global-orientated ideas and activities. Analysis was ongoing as we wrote memos on individual transcripts, across transcripts, and on related literature. A key element of grounded theory central to this work is that theory develops and evolves during each phase of research: data collection, coding, memo-writing, theoretical sampling, and reconstructing theory (Charmaz, 2006). In this work, we strive to “engage in theorizing as practice” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 122), where theorizing is a social action, “that researchers construct in concert with others in particular places and times” (p. 129). This action took place in various forms including: participant interaction and data collection, ongoing dialogue with data collected, individual researcher positionalities, continual data analysis in team meetings, and conversations with current research literature. This process of analysis strengthened the reliability, usefulness, and originality of the findings as it was rooted in the data and the researchers' reflexive work (Charmaz, 2006).

Findings/Discussion

A broader understanding of African immigrants’ enacted cosmopolitan citizenship offers an action-oriented global worldview that builds upon, extends, and supports new conceptualizations of cosmopolitan citizenship. African immigrants in our study bring forth complex understandings and construct identities of citizenship across learning experiences, and toward a shared space for all humanity (Nussbaum, 1996; 2002) in relationship to transnational and international moving, and various movements toward issues of social justice. They render orientations constructed within and among communities of belonging (El-Haj, 2007; Osler & Starkey, 2003), and conceptualize civic action based on a commitment to global issues involving the larger community of human beings. Specifically, six of the twenty participants rendered orientations toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship through their experiences as 1.5- and second-generation African immigrants. We examine findings of two interrelated themes, both of which are situated within the theoretical/conceptual framework of African immigrants’ orientations toward identities/attachments and enactments of an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship (see Figures 1 and 2) across which African immigrants: 1) identify and attach within and across local and global communities; and 2) enact these identities/attachments toward taking action around global issues.

Identities and attachments: Orientations toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship

So it was, it’s [...] this [...] bifocal thing [...]. It’s like, okay, you’re here [in the U.S.] but you’re still of that, of there [Nigeria], you know. And so, you know, when it
comes to being of service, it’s almost like you have to be of service to both arenas, you know, so there’s always what’s going on over there, what do my people need over there as well as what do my people need over here? (Steve)

In conceptualizing orientations toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship, participants, such as Steve, discussed a worldview in which they engaged in local, national, and global issues beyond the nation-state. Steve suggests a loyalty for a more shared space for all humanity (Nussbaum, 1996). For example, his bifocal lens reveals a worldview affixed to his stated local and global interactions that happens fluidly, not linearly. This fluidity highlights a complicated idea of reciprocity linked to Steve’s local and global identities, connecting within and across a consideration of “what people need” happening simultaneously and overlapping (Yewah & Togundé, 2011), rather than progressing from one stage to another. Thus, participants constructed their identities and attachments in relationship to transnational and international moving, where moving is a social and/or physical transitioning from one place to the next, such as Nigeria or Ghana to the U.S. and back. For example, Gene, a 1.5-generation immigrant from Ghana, renders visible a construction of citizenship and identities across moving through social and geographic spaces stating, “The way I see the world is Ghanaian, is Ghanaian but American made […] I owe a great debt to both of them […] But I feel like a citizen, I’m a citizen of both” (November 18, 2008). Gene highlights a flexible “nature of belonging” (Mitchell & Parker, 2008), belonging to a larger community, a citizen of multiple places and spaces, through an ideological, emotional, and physical attachment toward that global community (El-Haj, 2007). Enacted cosmopolitan citizenship further unfolds as participation in social, civic, or political movements toward issues of social justice taking place within and across multiple contexts of communities, schools, and social and organizations where participants have moved. For example, Ade, a second-generation immigrant from Nigeria, contextualizes involvement within various movements as enriched by her international moving. Ade resituates her moving as a place for civic learning and gaining a “sense of the world” as she notes:

There are so many Americans who have never been out of the country, don’t want to be out of the country, and don’t think there’s anything to be offered by any other country. Like just a very myopic, very kind of closed-down view about the world, because we’re the best, why do we need anyone? […] But if you don’t grow up here, you have a sense of the world as a bigger place and a more complex place and an interesting place and an openness to different kinds of experiences and different kinds of voices and different kinds of ways of seeing this world and seeing America. (January 25, 2009)

Ade suggests that social and physical movements contextualize an orientation toward identifying as a cosmopolitan citizen rather than denoting a “myopic, very kind of closed-down view of the world.” Her emerging identities as a citizen who possesses a worldview that moves beyond the nation-state forefronts global experiences and perspectives of different people from different places. She renders possibilities of identifying as a cosmopolitan citizen with her notions of the world as a “bigger place and a more complex place” through negotiating social, geographic, and political boundaries and engaging a “reflective” assessment of global civic issues (Hansen, 2010). Ade further intertwines individual and collective transnational moving and participation in movements when noting that prior to supporting Barack Obama she supported John Edwards’ candidacy for president of the U.S., “because [Edwards] was
working around poverty issues […] you know, kind of this populist message.” Ade constructs a particular positioning or movement as being concerned with a larger issue, poverty, affecting multiple individuals moving across contexts and boundaries. She possesses a desire to take a particular stance and engage in actions that support a “populist message,” a more inclusive, broader conception toward civic identities around issues toward social justice, such as poverty, for a shared global society.

Chike, a second-generation immigrant from Nigeria, similarly reflects orientations of identities and attachments toward a cosmopolitan worldview, noting cultural and geographical moving from Nigeria, to the Ivory Coast, to the U.S. Chike states:

I always felt like I was like a social – a cultural nomad because I was born in Cote d’Ivoire […] I spoke French. Culturally, I was Ivorian, but because of my name, Chike is a Nigerian name, you know, you were called etranger. etranger is the word for stranger, alien not foreigner […] so I went through social, like getting involved in everything, by the time I got to tenth grade [in Atlanta, Georgia] and got involved with the basketball team […] culturally I was American. (May 1, 2009)

Chike’s experiences of moving reflect the cosmopolitan ideal whereby one possesses multiple and overlapping identities (Kymlicka, 2004). Chike identifies as a “social – a cultural nomad” who at first as a learner was positioned as isolated and “called etranger”. He situates moving as social and cultural journey-bound learning experiences, where moving encourages action. In “getting involved in everything,” Chike engaged in a collective group, the basketball team, purposefully crisscrossing geographic boundaries of his Nigerian childhood home and elementary schooling in the Ivory Coast, and attending high school in the U.S. Chike’s involvement reveals a sense of belonging, and constructing emerging identities toward an allegiance to a global, shared humanity situated in his international journeying and experiences (Osler & Starkey, 2003).

Chike further conceptualizes orientations toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizen in noting:

I’ll learn about keeping in touch with the continent, keeping in touch with other international affairs, ‘cause I feel like I’m more of an international kind of guy, so I want to know everything around […] I’ve been in a situation where, I usually have a lot of people that are culturally different from [me], so relating with people from different cultures really hasn’t been an issue for me. (May 1, 2009)

Chike in constructing his identities within locally situated groups that possess multiple perspectives and experiences (Osler & Starkey, 2003) expresses an identity as an “international kind of guy” across contexts and communities. His experiences reflect his desire to learn from and interact with people within and across multiple global experiences. Chike experiences a physical and intellectual moving as journeying through international travel and schooling (Hansen, 2010), and embodies a sustained and continuous inquiry and attachment to communities and people, as he states, “I want to know everything around.” He is drawn to learning about international issues, and takes an active, local role as president of his college’s International Student Association. Chike’s international experiences provide a unique context for understanding how a loyalty to a global community of human beings might
take shape. Identities and attachments toward a cosmopolitan worldview are expressed as desiring to participate in learning, relationships, and connections within and across multiple, cross-cultural groups and experiences. Chike expresses both an emotional and physical attachment to a global community as he shares his worldview about concerning action for others noting, “I’m an all-around kind of guy, you know […] As much as I relate a lot with Nigerians, I still get – I speak French so I get along with a lot of different types of people, Europeans, Africans, stuff like that.” Chike’s orientation toward the world is situated both in connections with people on the continent as well as with a community of people from his childhood.

Similar to Chike, Jake, a 1.5-generation immigrant from Ghana, acknowledges his ability to connect with people, engaging in movements through identifying and attaching to an obligation toward a shared human experience; Jake states:

When other people tell me about their countries, like I have friends from Sierra Leone, I just love like how they are as people and so nice, and their culture and their food and everything, so I feel like I can go there and be free. Even though I might not have the documentation of a citizen. […] If you just give me a little, I can relate and be free because I see people as people, not for their skin color, but I look more so at their personality, character, and their insights that’s important to me. (January 17, 2009)

Jake explains his connection to the larger, global community by stating, “I feel like I can go anywhere… [and] I can relate and be free.” He extends his national loyalties and displays a sense of confidence when interacting with people far and near (Mitchell & Parker, 2008) regardless of his own immigration status and country of origin. Jake’s sense of “freedom” emerges as moving, a traveling to other countries, and “connecting” to and attaching with people beyond ethnic communities and national boundaries. He offers new conceptualizations of cosmopolitan citizenship toward an emerging connection to the humanness of people, privileging the shared commonalities one has with others. Jake’s experiences reflect an international positionality that is represented in an attitudinal and physical orientation toward a “cosmopolitan on the ground” (Hansen, 2010) where he is open to new experiences, but is loyal to his everyday experiences. For example, Jake notes, “I feel like I am a global citizen of this world because I’m connected to the two countries (Ghana and the United States), but I feel like I’m also connected to other countries.” Jake constructs his identity as a “global citizen of the world” compelling him to want to act while offering particular orientations toward attachments, through listening, connecting, and dialoguing with others, thereby serving as a vehicle for considering a common humanity toward solving common problems (Osler & Starkey, 2003); Jake states: “I feel like if I just listen to people’s stories, hear what they went through, what experiences they went through, just being there for them […] relating to them, what I went through […] that’s how I can make a difference (1/17/2009). Jake demonstrates the importance of considering identities and attachment in understanding enacted cosmopolitan citizenship as a willingness “to help each other.” Jake’s experiences provide the context for understanding his desire to learn about and connect with others through “shared experiences” and a concern for the larger community, through listening and acting on issues of communal concern. He supports a desire to work toward making people, communities, and the human experience better.
Steve, Gene, Ade, Chike, and Jake highlight intersecting local/global experiences that underscore multifaceted citizenship identities. Constructing such understandings of identities in an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship involves attaching and opening up to affiliations within and across communities, and commitments to others across the world. Doing so reflects a cosmopolitan worldview that unfolds in everyday life, reflecting identities and attachments toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship.

**Enactments: Orientations toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship**

I feel more […] I’m more able to donate to causes that I, you know, and that’s what I choose to do so. There’s this […] donation platform for underdeveloped countries where you can donate a certain amount to a particular individual or small business. You know, they all have like little profiles of what this person wants to do with the loan, and you know, you pick and—you know, so you have people from all over the world […] I feel being able to just help people, you know, and know that I’ll be okay. (Steve)

Participants such as Steve engage in an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship where action is taken on global issues involving the larger community of human beings. An enactment of one’s cosmopolitan worldview engages with their allegiances, concern, and/or obligation for a community of human beings toward action by participating in organizations with a global focus and teaching about peace and global human rights. For example, Tinda extends notions of an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship by making connections between her involvement in local and community organizations with larger national and global contexts through taking action on issues of community concern. When asked to describe the activities and issues she felt most compelled to act upon, Tinda’s notions of civic learning render moving toward a specific example of enacted cosmopolitan citizenship with a particular focus on liberal, global notions of human rights:

So the Planned Parenthood thing […] that’s local. But a lot of issues are national when it comes to funding and our policies are set forth by whichever president is in power. Some of the things are international, like the Save Darfur Coalition. A lot of work I do with them [my students] is international, but national in the sense that the U.S. government should be involved [in national and global issues]. When I was in college, I studied international policy, and at NYU I was really interested in working with the U.N. and seeing what they were doing, but more on the policy end. (February 15, 2009)

Tinda evokes a desire for actively enhancing the local and national community while contributing to the global community through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Save Darfur Coalition and Planned Parenthood. These organization’s primary goals reflect ideals of cosmopolitanism, whereby NGOs operate within national boundaries yet provide opportunities for action beyond a national scope (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009). Tinda’s enacted cosmopolitan citizenship reflects an active participant and agent of world-wide change, considering new and alternative views on local, national, and global issues, and taking action toward effective change on issues such as, immigration, women’s rights, and genocide.
Tinda’s actions give rise to concrete notions of enacted cosmopolitan citizenship in stating she was interested in, “seeing what they [the U.N.] are doing” or “a lot of work I do with them [students] is international.” Tinda moves philosophical debates on cosmopolitanism to reflect more than ideas of affluent groups. Rather cosmopolitanism occurs in local schools and communities, with immigrants and youth in multiple contexts. Such notions create space for cosmopolitanism and action whereby one’s experiences are juxtaposed with new frames of reference learned from others, and raise inquiries and openness to the larger, unknown world.

Enacted cosmopolitan citizenship involves a person engaging in action around issues of human rights and global justice; such a notion is further reflected in Jake’s commitment to peace, youth, and actions toward creating a better world. Jake is currently studying rehabilitation services and finds helping people with addictions and other mental health issues interesting. Jake’s cosmopolitan orientations position him as moving toward an enactment of cosmopolitan citizenship through a commitment to teaching and supporting young people’s understandings about peace, one another, and eliminating human suffering. This engagement renders visible social actions for the collective benefit of the global community; he states:

I would like to live in a world with just peace and where everybody understood each other […] That’s why I feel like the youth are very important, that we have to bring up younger kids to understand these basic principles about life and loving each other, and you know, that you can work things out by speaking not fighting. (January 17, 2009)

Jake reflects an understanding and celebration of difference foundational for identifying oneself as part of the community of human beings and engaging in global commitments. He knits understandings of global benefit to conceptualizations of civic learning and action, urging a teaching to youth of “principles about life.” Jake’s engagement with human beings across cultures and generations reflects civic action in traditional African societies, which connects learning across generations and promotes active and engaged participation in political, economic, cultural, and educational issues of the community (Avoseh, 2001).

Furthermore, Jake supports Nussbaum’s (1994) argument that cosmopolitans “should make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern […] and give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect” (p. 9). Dialogue unfolds as a specific component of action. Jake further contextualizes “understanding” and “speaking” as “actions” and “work.” He importantly notes the responsibilities of such work, through teaching youth about “speaking not fighting,” and centers his dialogic civic engagement as grounded in a concern for all humans desiring to “live in a world with just peace and where everybody understood each other.” Notably, Jake moves sentiments of justice toward action that emphasizes teaching our youth about the cosmopolitan principle of global human rights, wherein he states:

Basically it would be nice if more people were interested in finding out about Africa and even wanting to help those that are suffering there and to bring peace. Basically, I just want to see a change in people’s view, that they’re not so ignorant as far as
towards like—it seems like the darker you are, sometimes you’re discriminated against, and people might be afraid to sit next to you on the train. […] I want us to, as a people, stop being racist and profiling. I just want peace. (January 17, 2009)

For Jake, conceptions of citizenship encompass an element of social justice that goes beyond his neighborhood and city, and moves toward an emotional empathy for issues involving regional and, notably global justice (Gaudelli & Heliman, 2009) stressing “peace” and “finding out about Africa […] to help those that are suffering.” Jake’s emerging understanding, respect, and celebration of difference is an essential element for identifying oneself in a community of human beings, and toward a commitment to the larger world. Jake articulates an emboldened global citizenship, a teaching of active citizenship toward taking responsibility in creating a better world.

Jake and Tinda render a developing understanding of enacted cosmopolitan citizenship through connecting with all human beings, wanting to learn about and take action toward all human beings, and engaging with international issues for the betterment of all human beings. Jake and Tinda possess multiple and overlapping identities evidenced through their ability to link their local, national, and global identifications and actions situated within global human rights. Jake and Tinda’s responses support a concern for and a loyalty to a community beyond the local, a global community, whereby action must be taken to support and protect the interest of the benefit of humankind. They render an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship through working to promote peace, global human rights, diversity, and equity for all groups in their involvement in national and global organizations, and teaching youth about peace and global justice.

**Conclusion and Implications**

This study becomes increasingly significant as the African immigrant population in the U.S. and globally continues to grow and their understandings as well as experiences of civic action offer new conceptualizations of citizenship. Understanding and extending theories of civic learning and action, and orientations toward enacted cosmopolitan citizenship from the perspectives and experiences of African immigrants is timely and critical as we consider how education for citizenship and social justice is currently taking place. An exploration of two themes toward an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship: 1) identities and attachments, and 2.) enactments, offers implications for civic education curricula for the 21st-century learner. Furthermore, findings inform extra-curricular activities involving civic engagement within and across communities, schools, and families.

Cosmopolitanism is arguably considered to be raising “new questions about civic and citizenship education and, in general, about how education can equip people to negotiate justly and peacefully cultural, religious, ethnic, and other differences” (Hansen, 2010, p. 3). We examine how African immigrants within and among multiple and layered contexts (re)conceptualize the intersections of cosmopolitanism and civic learning and action. We provide insights into how to go about creating a civic education curricula that is focused on understanding one’s personal orientations in the world; how this orientation influences one’s cosmopolitan worldview; and how to consider an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship. Specifically, an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship draws upon African immigrants’ complex negotiations of citizenship, identities, and attachments toward pointed civic actions within and across
local and global, and formal and informal contexts of schooling and learning. African immigrants’ in this study share new understandings of civic learning and action as situated in their experiences as cosmopolitan citizens; therefore shedding new light on how youth think about and interact with human being around the world. As a result, African immigrants’ civic actions render new conceptualizations of citizenship toward issues of global social justice, like poverty, peace, and human rights.

Further research on how immigrant youth globally conceptualize cosmopolitan citizenship provides a space for understanding how current constructions of local and/or national curricula, mandated or otherwise, address issues of citizenship in global societies. While schools are a useful site for promoting, exploring, and developing cosmopolitan citizenship ideals through peace, human rights, and injustice, consideration may be given to ways in which this work is currently taking place inside and outside of classroom walls, which can mutually inform one another. Enacted cosmopolitan citizenship occurs in various situated contexts, such as within and across communities, schools, and families. Teaching and developing the knowledge, skills, and orientations for taking action in the interest of the global community involves recognizing possibilities of an enacted cosmopolitan citizenship to support teaching and learning opportunities for all youth that forefront ways in which to hope for, to conceptualize, and to enact a more peaceful and equitable global society.
References


