CONTESTATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP, EDUCATION, AND DEMOCRACY IN AN ERA OF GLOBAL CHANGE

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN DIVERSE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS

Edited by
Patricia K. Kubow, Nicole Webster, Krystal Strong and Daniel Miranda
Contestations of Citizenship, Education, and Democracy in an Era of Global Change

*Contestations of Citizenship, Education, and Democracy in an Era of Global Change: Children and Youth in Diverse International Contexts* considers the shifting social, political, economic, and educational structures shaping contemporary experiences, understandings, and practices of citizenship among children and youth in diverse international contexts. As such, this edited book examines the meaning of citizenship in an era defined by monumental global change. Chapters from across both the Global South and North consider emerging formations of citizenship and citizen identities among children and youth in formal and non-formal education contexts, as well as the social and civic imaginaries and practices to which children and youth engage, both in and outside of schools.

Rich empirical contributions from an international team of contributors call attention to the social, political, economic, and educational structures shaping the ways young people view citizenship and highlight the social and political agency of children and youth amid increasing issues of polarization, climate change, conflict, migration, extremism, and authoritarianism. The book ultimately identifies emergent forms of citizenship developing in formal and non-formal educational contexts, including those that unsettle the nation-state and democracy.

Edited by a team of academics with backgrounds in education, citizenship, and youth studies, this book will appeal to scholars, researchers, and faculty who work across the broader field of youth civic engagement and democracy, as well as international and comparative education and citizenship.

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Contestations of Citizenship, Education, and Democracy in an Era of Global Change
Children and Youth in Diverse International Contexts

Edited by Patricia K. Kubow, Nicole Webster, Krystal Strong and Daniel Miranda
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Foreword

Comparative and International Education: The Challenges of Citizenship and Youth Voices

This book edited by Patricia K. Kubow, Nicole Webster, Krystal Strong, and Daniel Miranda is solidly located in the multiple interdisciplinary fields, which build the tapestry of international and comparative education as interdisciplinary fields of teaching, research, and practice.

By definition, these multiple fields interrogate reality from diverse viewpoints, theories, and methodologies, helping to shed light on the controversies and insights that emerge in diverse areas of education, public policy, and the like. This book explores the connection between citizenship building and youth voices and social movements through emerging challenges.

Surely the readers of this book would wonder why comparative and international education continues to be relevant today? If there is one process that justified the interest of comparativists are the multiple processes of globalization, what is known as the different weaves of globalization, and by implication neoliberalism, impacting our consciousness as much as it impacts our universities, teaching, research, and political-pedagogical action.

Since comparativists started to focus on this phenomena and its impact in our discipline in the 1990s, we are confronted by an even more complex and conflictive national and international scenario, particularly with a war in Europe, a global crisis of the world system, and raising inflation deeply affecting the cost of commodities. If these problems will not be sufficient, access to basic foods and services are more difficult to obtain with analysts and journalists warning of incoming famines in the poorest areas of the world. It is in this social context that accommodations of the axis of power worldwide, and the presence of authoritarian populist and even neofascist movements further contribute shattering the foundations of liberal democracies.

Scholars in comparative and international education have discussed the dialectics of the global and the local from a planetarian perspective. The construct of dialectics is not only a rhetorical device. The concept speaks to subtle and open, intimate as well as universal processes deeply impacting our lived
experience, the ecology of the social sciences, and certainly the thinking about, and practice of education worldwide.

But how we confront scientifically the challenges of globalization to education and particularly in the constitution of new forms of citizenships? For decades what has predominated is a hegemonic scientific model that could be termed “scientificism.” This model separates culture from knowledge, disassociating also power from human interest. This paradigm of normal science emerges as a powerful and unchallenged principle of social rationalization, which serves only analytical goals, though eventually could be implemented in specific policies. Science seems then narrowly defined as a mixture of positivism and instrumentalism and defended on the grounds of statistical rigor and objectivity. Today, the multiple conspiracies pullulating in the internet and discussions of fake news question the validity of scientific premises, challenging the viability of scientific rationality for social engineering and public policy.

Faced with this new reality, a new research rationality emerges, giving growing importance to phenomenology, dialectics, grounded theory, mixed methods, and several forms of qualitative methods. This background provides new narratives such as eco-pedagogy, post-colonialism, subaltern theories, critical theory, theories of racism, or culturally sensitive pedagogies, to name just a few, which are gaining ground in educational research. No doubt, these new traditions are departing drastically from educational patterns associated with top-down neoliberal models of globalization. This book implements and utilizes some of these perspectives exploring the connections between citizenship building, social movements, and youth voices.

Though public education has been called upon to develop a new labor force to meet the rapidly changing international economic demands, new policy dilemmas emerge, particularly concerning the privatization and decentralization of schools. This movement includes raising educational standards and placing a stronger emphasis on testing and school accountability. Decisions based on economic changes have espoused new visions for school reform in universities as well.

Given these challenges, a new generation of comparative educators have become more knowledgeable in traditional fields such as educational foundations, ethnic, class, race, gender, disability, sexuality, or area studies, but they also need to delve into the new domains of political sociology of education, educational anthropology, political science, and political philosophy. Bringing youth voices from the background to the foreground seems to be a crucial contribution of this book.

Becoming more knowledgeable also means being able to create better connections between facts, data, theory, and methods to seek models of explanation of the dilemmas of comparative education. Such models, theories, and theses can be assessed and evaluated jointly with our students in our classrooms.

The diversity of locations, gender, ethnicities, languages, political-pedagogical commitments, and the plurality of methods and theories employed in
comparative and international education classrooms brought multiple voices and ways of enriching our understanding and how we can change the world. Critical theorists insisted that comparative educators should teach and research to change the world into a better world that is possible.

This book takes seriously one of the key concepts that is akin to Freire’s main teaching: the ontological vocation of humanity based on the role of education. The emergence of post-national citizenships questions the principles and values as well as the rights and responsibilities in which national citizenships were founded. Does this new reality reflect a crisis of classic liberalism and particularly of its neoliberal decline in the face of new challenges of globalization and diversity? Multiculturalism, one of the answers to the dilemmas of citizenship and diversity, shows signs of crises in many national contexts confronting the premises of identity and citizenship.

Concepts such as cosmopolitan democracy and global citizenship education have been invoked as solutions to the possible demise of the regulatory power of the nation-state and failed citizenship worldwide. The implementation of the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) in 2012 by the UN Secretary Ban-Ki Moon and, afterward, the Sustainable Development Goals promulgated by the United Nations in 2015 set the tone for this conversation on global citizenship and its impact on national citizenship and sustainability.

As the editors Kubow, Webster, Strong, and Miranda tell us: “Valuing youth voice in this book has also meant exploring new methodological approaches and representational politics in our engagements with children and youth. As youth around the world powerfully articulate their own ideas and visions for the future through youth-generated media content, digitally-activated movements, community-based organizations, and myriad forms of grassroots leadership, as a field, we are called to center youth not merely as research subjects but also as interlocutors and collaborators.”

Any critical theorist will wholeheartedly agree with these premises, and particularly with the findings of these multiple case studies and theory-driven research that “youth interconnectedness and mobilization around concerns of a global nature reveal a moral impetus to address social ills from new spaces and places and citizen diasporic identities encompassing race, ethnicity, class, gender, and migration” in the face of new tensions and challenges, which Kubow, Webster, Strong, and Miranda identify in terms of the following: fluidity and hybridity, interconnectedness and belonging, identities and identifications, diverse theoretical and philosophical traditions, empowerment and engagement, agency and activism, globals (in the plural), contestations, value convergences and divergences, justice-oriented ideologies, and pedagogies.

Focusing on these ten critical tensions and new directions of our contemporary world should mark the future of comparative education but also social sciences in the next quarter of a century. We shall be grateful to the editors and the authors of this book for bringing to the forefront the voices of youth and youth movements and highlighting some of the crucial areas for further scientific and political contributions.
We should embrace all of those engaged in serious contributions to international and comparative education, particularly those concerned with the question of global citizenship education, youth movements, and voices, and wish you all the best in your work saying with the poet Walt Whitman in *Song of Myself*:

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems . . .

You shall listen to all sides and filter them for yourself.

Carlos Alberto Torres
1 Contestations of Citizenship
An Introduction

Patricia K. Kubow, Nicole Webster, Krystal Strong, and Daniel Miranda

Introduction
The intent of this book, Contestations of Citizenship, Education, and Democracy in an Era of Global Change: Children and Youth in Diverse International Contexts, is to bring the lived experiences of youth into dialogue with dominant and non-dominant discourses of citizenship and citizenship education. The book explores the ways in which citizenship has been framed in various international locales and how youth perceive citizenship norms and civic practices in the Global South and North, offering opportunities to critique and contest binary conceptions of citizenship (e.g., national/international, local/global, private/public, and individual/societal). By interrogating “the national,” this text unsettles the taken-for-granted concepts of democracy and the nation-state by framing citizenship in light of youth experience and perspective with and beyond the global hegemon. Living in an era defined by major global change necessitates greater attention in the field of comparative and international education toward citizen knowledges, identities, and practices of youth. The chapters probe the local/global current in our field and suggest emergent framings of citizenship and citizenship education informed by youth views about the complex conditions and forces influencing their experiences inside and outside schools. Key questions addressed in this text include: How is “the global” being framed in light of recent events in our world? What do the perceptions and concerns of youth suggest about the kind of citizenship education to be promoted in formal and non-formal educational spaces? And, how can this knowledge gained from studies of youth inform future directions for comparative studies of citizenship and education?

This book interrogates and contests citizenship’s traditional framings by ascertaining international youth perspectives. The editors and contributing authors are comparative and international educators who have conducted research studies of citizenship and youth in formal and informal education spaces in the Global South and North. The studies of youth in these chapters unsettle the nation-state and traditional approaches to citizenship, while also challenging existing constructions of citizenship. It is apparent that the meanings of citizenship are changing for youth amid monumental global changes...
brought about by the intersection of social, political, economic, technological, and cultural forces. These powers are shaping contemporary experiences, understandings, and practices of citizenship among youth in a myriad of geographic locales, which are addressed in this text: Africa (Liberia and Nigeria); Asia (Taiwan SAR, Hong Kong SAR, the People’s Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea); Australia; Europe (Flemish-speaking Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Sweden, and the North Rhine Westphalia region in Germany); Latin America (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Peru); and North America (Canada and the US). Readers are asked to consider how citizen identity, positioning, and narrative translate into citizenship educational practice.

The overarching question explored is: What kinds of citizenship are youth in diverse locales resisting and toward what conceptions of citizenship are they supporting? The research studies and analyses undertaken with youth populations in the Global South and North highlight the rigidity of schools as institutions that are slow to change, but that hold possibilities for offering a citizenship education that can help students critique and address global challenges. The text considers the ways in which youth—through a combination of global and local influences—are being summoned to particular social and civic imaginaries and practices for which they resist and engage. This text calls attention to the social and political agency of youth in the midst of rising popular struggles around economic polarization, climate change, conflict, migration, displacement, and a rise in xenophobia, extremism, and authoritarianism worldwide. To understand the challenges youth face as they develop their citizen identities in a global era, the book interrogates notions of “good” citizenship and the ways youth navigate, mediate, and resist the kinds of citizen identities promoted by their respective nation-states. The overall purpose is to uncover the ways diverse populations of youth view citizenship and civic identity in light of globalizing forces. In essence, the book is a conceptual turn toward a theory of youth voice to inform dominant discourses on citizenship and citizenship education. It is a call for a theory of youth voice to inform citizenship and citizenship education discourse in the field of comparative and international education.

Framing the global

We are, indisputably, in an era of global change that has been shaped by, and will shape, generations of children and youth to come. Multiple social, political, and economic developments of the past decade have profoundly shifted the current conditions and future possibilities of younger generations. The 2010s began in the shadows of the Great Recession, followed by the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, and ended with the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered an even worse financial crisis for global economies. For countries of the Global North and South, alike, these economic crises
have resulted in historic unemployment rates, diminished job prospects for young people, historically high levels of educational debt, and rising economic inequality for more than 70% of the world’s population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). The past decade has also been the hottest on record, signaling the intensification of the global climate crisis, which has contributed to an increasing frequency of catastrophic natural disasters that experts predict will lead to “irreversible loss and damage” for children and youth, especially in the Global South (Menke & Schleussner, 2019). With the surge in authoritarian, populist, and nationalist governments and popular movements in the same time period, political analysts have declared that “democracy is in retreat” around the world, strengthening political polarization, fueling state conflict, and seemingly rolling back the wave of “democratization” brought on by the end of the Cold War (Freedom House, 2019).

Due in part to these economic, environmental, and political conditions, the number of people forcibly displaced from their homes has doubled since 2010 to the highest figure recorded by the United Nations since World War II. There are currently more than 70 million people displaced worldwide (UNHCR, 2020). More than half of the world’s refugee population (Oxfam International, 2021), and one out of every eight international migrants, is a child, who is five times more likely to lack educational access (UNICEF, n.d.). For instance, in the first month of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, UNICEF reported that 4.3 million Ukrainian children have been displaced, which is more than half of the country’s estimated 7.5 million child population (NPR, 2022). Thus, the impacts of conflict, international migration and displacement, hostile immigration policies, trafficking, and health pandemics are the backdrop necessitating an urgent reexamination and reframing of citizenship and citizenship education.

While these conditions have created unprecedented constraints on the possibilities for global children and youth, they have also created openings through which youth, by necessity, have exercised their power in advocating for and demanding better conditions to survive and thrive. After years of research and policy that characterized global youth as “disengaged” (Delli Carpini, 2000), often blaming the effects of media and the Internet on this supposed lack of youth political engagement, youth have taken up leadership at the forefront of social movements, turning increasingly to protest and other forms of digitally mediated participatory politics (Cohen et al., 2012; Dalton, 2015). To illustrate, in The Time of Youth, Alcinda Honwana (2012) describes the “rising up” of children and youth today as “cries for freedom by a generation yearning to make a place for itself in the world” (p. 3). Though much of the scholarship and media coverage of youth activism and advocacy of the 2010s has tended to center the Global North, youth around the world have created the largest wave of youth-led activism since the global rebellions and cultural revolution of 1968. Many of these movements have a national and a regional character. The 2011 Tunisian revolution beginning with the self-immolation
of Mohamed Bouazizi, an unemployed street vendor, catalyzed youth uprisings for regime change that spread across the Arab world, including Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, and Libya.

Movements for regime change targeting long-term leaders have similarly formed in 25 African countries over the past decade. The May 2011 Los Indignados (The Indignant Ones) Movement that took hold in Spain, after government cuts to public services, would be the first in a wave of anti-austerity protests led by youth taking aim at the dire economic prospects for youth, including Occupy Wall Street in the US and in nations across Europe. Other movements with a global reach have produced new models of youth organizing. Black Lives Matter in the US, which formed in response to extrajudicial police killings of Black people, has influenced subsequent movements around state violence in Nigeria, Brazil, and India, among others, and typifies the way social media has become central to youth activism online and offline.

The international School Strike for Climate or Fridays for Future Movement, which at its peak in September 2019, galvanized an estimated four million students in strike actions in more than 150 countries, is the most widespread organized student movement in a decade that has seen a resurgence of student activism around the world on educational funding, democracy, racial justice, and educational inequality.

The increase in mass mobilizations around the world and the active participation of young people in them highlight the changes in the relationship of the younger generations with politics, on the one hand, and the implicit interconnection between mobilization actions in different parts of the world, on the other. Between 2009 and 2019, mass mobilizations increased in all regions of the world by around 20% (Brannen et al., 2020). In these, both university and high school students have made protest actions more frequent and more visible (Bissant et al., 2021) in different parts of the world (Lai & Sing, 2021; Lertchoosakul, 2021; Shek, 2020). These mobilizations carry an implicit tension. They respond to problems of a local nature as well as circumscribe aspects of global influence. The type of protest actions, the forms of coordination using virtual media, or specific symbolism can be observed in the different countries where mobilizations take place. For instance, in Latin America, during the second part of 2019, there were a series of massive protest events in countries such as Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador (Busso & Messina, 2020), with a significant presence of high school students (Rice, 2020; Tapia et al., 2021). Characteristics such as the absence of leaders to lead the protests, the use of digital media to spread actions, the use of concepts such as “the front line,” or the use of artistic expressions as a means of protest were seen before and after in multiple protest events (Lai & Sing, 2021). This phenomenon of influence in protest actions is not necessarily new, but it occurs with a different speed that this global era allows.

These movements invite scholars and practitioners, especially comparative educators, to take more seriously the agency of children and youth, and to reject long-held views and frameworks that suggest that young people have
become “apathetic” or were ever apathetic about their futures. This is the first generation that expects to be worse off than their parents. As Earl et al. (2017) argue, “[Y]oung people’s move toward protest instead of institutional political activity, like voting and working through political parties, results from changing dispositions about the meaning of citizenship” (p. 6). What does it mean to come of age under these circumstances? What does it mean to develop a sense of belonging (or not) and to what do young people seek to belong? This edited book examines the meaning of citizenship in light of the shifting social, political, economic, and educational structures that shape contemporary experiences, understandings, and practices of citizenship among children and youth in diverse international contexts. The contributions in this book call attention to the social and political agency of children and youth in the midst of rising popular struggles worldwide. In this introduction, we trace the state of our field and the way the field is shifting (or needs to shift) to be aligned with youth, citizenship, democracy, and education in this moment of monumental global change.

Framing youth

Society must strive more than ever to defend democratic governance and tackle sustainable development difficulties entrenched in structural inequality and exclusion as the globe starts the long and arduous process of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and other social ills facing societies. Given that young people are disproportionately harmed and have the most significant stake in the outcome, their engagement and inclusion in politics and the social fabric of their cultures are critical. Modern youth struggle to achieve social and economic milestones associated with maturity, such as graduating from high school and being financially self-sufficient, among other things. They must also deal with complicated global issues such as climate change and increasing political division. Even though there are more impediments than ever before for young people, they are taking action and inventing new methods to question the status quo and demand responsibility of policymakers to not only take action but also invent new disciplinary tactics and demands to change the status quo. As a result of rising disillusionment and mistrust, young people are finding ways to respond to the multiple social, political, and economic injustices they are facing. Their nuanced actions are reframing new ways of thinking and contextualizing citizenship and aid in ushering in a new school of thought about youth civic participation on a global scale (Webster et al., 2020).

Worldwide, young people are at a crossroads as they face a variety of complex concerns, ranging from environmental degradation to rising gender inequalities to basic insecurity (Bersaglio et al., 2015; Orekhovskaya et al., 2018; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018). They must also struggle with established political and civic powerholders who are often unreachable, unresponsive, and corrupt at the same time, while their socioeconomic options become more
constrained. Despite their excitement about the future, today’s young people are being left behind; they constitute the most significant proportion of the worldwide jobless or underemployed population. Disenchanted with traditional political institutions and procedures, youth are seeking to address these issues through effective means that create effective change.

Even though many adults regard young people as apathetic and incapable, youth civic participation is increasing in many countries, with young people expressing hope for the possibility of bringing about positive social change and the ability to influence the direction in which their countries are headed. The most significant demonstrations of the 21st century have been fueled by diverse groups of young people calling for a more fair, egalitarian, and sustainable future for everyone. Protests against long-standing economic inequality in Chile, corruption in Lebanon, police brutality in Nigeria, gender inequality and limits on reproductive freedom in Poland, and restricted economic possibilities in Tunisia are just a few examples of what is happening throughout the world. Young women activists play significant leadership roles throughout these uprisings and other movements, although they face impediments to participation and ingrained gender norms. Thousands of women are demonstrating globally against governments and patriarchal societies, questioning long-held beliefs about women’s involvement in political life. People under 30 years of age are ready and eager to act and take the initiative to make substantial changes in society. Still, they are less likely to participate in politics via established channels of involvement or with decision-makers who are hesitant to recognize and embrace their contributions. Issues of disengagement are even more salient among youth in conflict-ridden areas across the globe.

It is well-known that children raised in conflictual settings face several barriers during the course of their development. There is clear evidence of the long-lasting effects of collective violence among survivors and subsequent generations. Given the importance of identity development for youth, it is hardly surprising that identification is associated with a wide range of negative and positive outcomes for youth growing up in conflict settings. Understanding identity processes is critical in such environments because conflicts are often due to, and maintained by, competing social identities.

Across a wide range of conflict settings, youth social identity has been examined in relation to a host of other processes. For example, a strong sense of social identity is associated with a sense of solidarity, particularly during social change, and a motivating factor for engaging in such change processes, particularly among minority youth. Moreover, evidence shows that social identity can be a protective factor for youth (Kubow, 2019). A strong sense of identity buffers youth exposed to violence, while a weaker identity among youth leaves them vulnerable to such exposure (Le & Stockdale, 2008; Merrilees et al., 2013). A strong sense of social identity has also been found to protect adolescents from developing more significant depressive symptoms. It exacerbates aggression against the out-group over time. The trajectories of the strength of social identity have also been shown to vary based on group status (Reidy
Contestations of Citizenship

The development or maturation in the strength of social identity has also been related to lower levels of insecurity in the community or feeling threatened by out-group members (Reidy et al., 2015). These studies suggest that understanding the role of social identity during adolescence is an essential factor in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Young people hold the promise for the future through their energy, idealism, passion, optimism, and ability to come up with new ideas. While their efforts are often undervalued and primarily go unrecognized, many young people outside the media's spotlight have become embodiments of commitment, resilience, community service, accountability, and trust. What is clear is that if humanity is to tackle society's most complex challenges effectively, we must help inculcate such values in the next generations of youth. Globally, young people understand the value of mobilizing to the call for social change. Youth's public interest in civic engagement is grounded in actions, such as walkouts and mass protests, to address issues such as repression, poor governance, corruption, and unemployment. The momentum built by these types of actions eventually contributes toward a change or movement in systems which impact young people. Youth continue to play an essential role in national and transnational political discourse. Their core values largely depend on whether they can effectively harness their idealism to help change the world.

Unfortunately, young people today are mainly understood as disengaged citizens. Current ideologies only emphasize public actions that imply government as being at the center of politics, and other social group institutions as the foundations of civic life (Bennett, 2008). These are primarily adult-centric definitions, which distort the image of young people and reinforce hegemonic ideas about their marginal status (Farthing, 2010). These adult-centric definitions of citizenship are also deeply ingrained in a young person's education. Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) describe how Canadian citizenship education in formal schooling is highly neoliberal, focusing on economic freedom from state interference and political individualism. Other scholars argue that youth participation and the meanings they ascribe to citizenship are constantly changing (Youniss et al., 2002) and are driven by the shifting political (Aniywo et al., 2020; Llewellyn et al., 2010; Weiss, 2020), gender (Cicognani et al., 2012; Gaby, 2017), and cultural landscapes in societies (Kennelly, 2009). Citizenship is often defined by compliant behavior and makes a distinction between legitimate forms of citizenship and perceived illegitimate forms employed by activists. This framing of citizenship only affirms the passive messages about the “good” young citizen and disregards how the decline in traditional modes of engagement is offset by extra-institutional activities, such as boycotts, demonstrations, and petitions (Webster et al., 2020). Undermining the legitimacy of these new forms of citizenship is another way of upholding the status quo and silencing the voices of young people (Farthing, 2010). The citizenship and rights discourse provides important context about the competing forms of democratic participation between youth and adults. Understanding youth citizenship participation from this perspective will help navigate discussions
that address the supposed illegitimacy of youth forms of civic engagement and explore the power imbalances embedded in this conflict.

As children enter what could be called adult-defined environments of engagement, due to societal tensions, they find themselves organizing through various platforms. Moving from physical to cyberspaces manifested by social media, children are constantly creating a new narrative of citizenship. The actualizing of citizenship through multiple formats creates a discourse that young people can co-create new forms of civic engagement. Their ability to co-construct actions and ideologies toward democracy seems to challenge some existing beliefs that youth are unable to be fully vested as developers of constructive citizenship. For example, Webster et al. (2020) discuss how conventional practices and beliefs held about youth-led engagement efforts are attempting to acknowledge the legitimacy of youth civic engagement actions. Their work reiterates youth’s potential to create models of action to support civic efforts in their communities. In essence, youth are actualizing their citizenship participation in critical ways that begins to address democracy and freedom with more nuanced behaviors and beliefs. Kubow’s (2019) work with Jordanian and Syrian urban youth, for instance, reveals how social ontologies of citizen identity among youth are informed by a complex array of identity markers, including nationality, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, and their developmental stage. Research with Xhosa youth in South Africa also reinforces that a host of identity markers—encompassing more than political and economic considerations alone—are important to youth and must be considered in conceptualizing citizenship and citizenship education (Kubow & Berlin, 2013; Kubow & Ulm, 2015).

Amid cultural diversity and globalization, social change is pushing our concept of citizenship in new directions, including the expansion of information and knowledge through new forms of knowledge creation, much of which is being developed by young people around the globe. Increasing multidirectional movements of people, environmental degradation related to climate change, and the consolidation of international governance bodies have all had an impact on how citizens, particularly youth, relate to their societies. These multiple processes of economic, technological, environmental, social, and political change contribute to the expansion of citizenship worldwide due to their rapid pace, interdependence, and complexity. As societies and cultures become more internationalized and multicultural, attention must be given to the ways young people are introduced to new opportunities to conceptualize citizenship within and beyond the borders of nation-states. Cultural diversity and hybridity must also be considered in youth citizen identity formation and conceptions of citizenship.

Due to the rising complexity of social and political landscapes of communities, there is an emergence of tensions and contestations in post-national societies. These challenges have given rise to new forms of social mobilization and links to transnational movements and the activism of young people. These forms of transnational activism are inextricably linked to social communities
and the emergence of post-national conceptions of citizenship. In light of these transformations, it is essential that we keep in mind that citizenship takes place in a variety of contexts and is informed by the lived experiences of citizens. We see an increasingly interconnected view of citizenship as global thought expands and the meaning of citizenship is redefined. There are direct and indirect links between youth and civic action within their communities and the countries where they reside, which advances the meaning of civic engagement at a broader level. When citizenship is viewed from this perspective, it takes a cosmopolitan perspective, as it acknowledges the challenges involved in creating a more just society and recognizes the complexities, conflicts, and contexts in which youth on a global scale find themselves.

**Framing citizenship**

To locate conceptions of the “citizen” in larger debates about the meanings and processes of citizenship, it is useful to explore some dominant and non-dominant citizenship discourses. Discourse, understood as a body of rules and practices that govern conceptual meanings (Foucault, 1972), appropriates certain ideologies that guide people’s understandings of their place in the social world (Hall, 1986). Discourse about citizenship, and educating for citizenship, are primarily ways in which citizenship ideology is produced, reproduced, and circulated (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). Not natural or neutral, democratic citizenship is shaped by political interests and visions of what the role of the nation-state should be. Kubow (2010) discusses how the dominant discourses of citizenship have been informed largely by Western traditions and located within the imaginary of the nation-state, or what Benedict Anderson (1991) has described as “imagined communities.” Citizenship implies membership in a community (legal status) and an identity (social belonging). Citizenship confers membership, identity, values, participation rights, and common political knowledge (Enslin, 2000), while belonging promotes social or community cohesion. Citizens have been considered to be made or born (Heater, 1999). Citizenship, therefore, has been connected to a location (territory, land, or residence) (Isin, 2009) or acquired through inheritance (one acquires the citizenship of one’s parent at birth) (Heater, 1999). Because equality and freedom are intimately related to constructions of citizenship, how the nation-state balances “cultural demands for differentiation and citizenship demands for integration,” while also maintaining moral and political integrity, is a chief concern (Heater, 1999, p. 115).

Liberal and civic republican traditions have long framed citizenship in the West (Heater, 1999), with democratic participation and individual rights as prominent threads anchoring dominant citizenship discourses (Arneil, 2006). British sociologist T. H. Marshall (1998) identified three categories of citizenship in relation to individual rights, namely civil citizenship (right to speech, property, and equality before the law), political citizenship (right to participate in political processes, often through elected representatives),
and social citizenship (right to general economic well-being and security). Conceptions of the “good” citizen have guided models of citizenship education based on personal responsibility, participation, and justice-orientation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). However, youth are seldom exposed to a justice-oriented citizenship in formal educational institutions due to its critical emphasis on exploring the root causes of injustice and bringing about social change through democratic social movements. Moreover, most conceptions of citizenship from the Western tradition bifurcate the individual and society, meaning that the individual is conceived as being separate from society and must leave the confines of the private space of the home to engage in the work of the public sphere (Kubow, 2007). This has led to a public-private schism in conceptualizations of citizenship and a devaluation of contributions by women, indigenous knowledge systems, and non-Western approaches that can inform citizenship discourses at large (Kubow, 2007).

Western traditions and assumptions have shaped conceptions of citizenship beyond Western borders through global imperialism. Globalization’s influence is manifested in the economic and political sphere, in the rate and reach of knowledge across space and time through digital technologies, in the movement of populations and mingling of cultures and identities, and in peoples’ views, attitudes, and behaviors toward others (Kubow & Fossum, 2007). Globalizing aims may change or solidify youths’ allegiances and affect their views on questions of justice. As a result, national and global identities have competed for attention in and outside of schools around the world. Dominant citizenship discourses shape social identities, although individuals challenge dominant identities through a process of performativity and language, which function as forms of social action (Butler, 1997; Foucault, 1972; Hall, 1986). While world culture theorists conceive of diverse locals integrating into a single “global,” post-colonial theorists warn against globalization’s homogenizing tendencies and advocate for differentiation. The concern among conflict theorists is that a sole vision of global identity is promoted through dominant ideology that preserves existing power relations. As Nelly Stromquist (2009) explains, “citizenship is linked to universalism, as opposed to particularism, and yet the world is far from equal, and many ‘particularistic’ forms of behavior prevail” (p. 23). We advocate for the consideration of different perspectives on the nature of citizenship and guard against any one global identity in a reimagining of citizenship education for youth.

The contestations levied in relation to Western universalism include: the colonization of the mind as a result of European imperialism (wa Thiong’o, 1986); the need for knowledge from the global South (Amin, 2011) to inform citizenship; the appropriation of post-colonial theory to global citizenship education (Andreotti, 2011); and the consideration of democratic citizenship approaches in non-Western contexts (Kovalchuk & Rapoport, 2019). To this list, we add the need for youth perspectives on, and engagement with, citizenship. A decolonization of citizenship and citizenship education requires the deconstruction of values, knowledges, and preferences that derive from a