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Online publication date: 24 November 2009

To cite this Article Schattle, Hans (2005) 'Communicating Global Citizenship: Multiple Discourses Beyond the Academy', Citizenship Studies, 9: 2, 119 — 133
To link to this Article DOI: 10.1080/13621020500049077
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13621020500049077
Communicating Global Citizenship:
Multiple Discourses Beyond the Academy

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ABSTRACT This article demonstrates that notions of “global citizenship”, as communicated beyond academic debates in political theory and sociology, can be situated within two overarching discourses: a civic republican discourse that emphasizes concepts such as awareness, responsibility, participation and cross-cultural empathy, and a libertarian discourse that emphasizes international mobility and competitiveness. Within each of these discourses, multiple understandings of citizen voice can be identified. Exploring how myriad ways of thinking related to “global citizenship” are springing forth in public debate serves to illustrate new ways in which a wide variety of political, social and economic actors are reflecting upon the meaning of voice and citizenship in the context of increasing public recognition of global interdependence. Not only has “global citizenship” emerged as a variant within the concept of citizenship, but the concept of “global citizenship” contains many variants and sources of internal division. How the concept of “global citizenship” continues to evolve in public discourse, especially in response to watershed events, promises to remain a fruitful line of inquiry for years to come.

Introduction

The concept of “global citizenship” is no longer confined to a small cadre of political philosophers and advocates for world government. During the past decade, the term “global citizenship” increasingly has been communicated in public discourse by individuals across a wide variety of political, social and economic institutions—elementary schools encouraging children to embrace other cultures; secondary schools striving to render graduates more competitive in the global marketplace; multinational corporations projecting images of social responsibility amid critical scrutiny from stakeholders, journalists and advocacy groups; and myriad political and social activists appealing to visions of solidarity, accountability and mobilization across borders. Published references to “global citizenship” have proliferated dramatically in news coverage across the English-speaking world and beyond. On a daily basis, keyword searches for “global citizenship” and its cognates turn up news articles, broadcast transcripts, press releases and speeches that reveal new ways in which the concept is articulated, as well as new sorts of individuals and organizations that see fit either to
describe themselves as “global citizens”, or to incorporate “global citizenship” into mission statements and strategies, or to hold up “global citizenship” as an ideal worth pursuing.

The expansion in public discourse related to “global citizenship”, alongside the burgeoning academic debate regarding the feasibility of cosmopolitan citizenship,\(^3\) is now clear. Awaiting further clarification are the multiple streams of ideas percolating in this public discourse, indicating that many interpretations of “global citizenship” presently compete and co-exist in ways that echo Judith Shklar’s famous observation that “there is no notion more central in politics than citizenship, and none more variable in history, or contested in theory” (Shklar, 1991, p. 1). In reality, multiple public discourses of “global citizenship” have emerged, and this article seeks to demonstrate that “global citizenship” as communicated beyond the academy can be situated within two overarching discourses: a civic republican discourse that emphasizes concepts such as awareness, responsibility, participation and cross-cultural empathy, and a libertarian discourse that emphasizes international mobility and competitiveness. What is more, within each of these discourses, multiple understandings of citizen voice can be identified. Exploring how myriad ways of thinking related to “global citizenship” are springing forth in public discourse, then, serves to illustrate new ways in which a wide variety of political, social and economic actors are reflecting upon the meaning of voice and citizenship in the context of increasing public recognition of global interdependence.

The documentation presented in this article derives from an empirical research project in which two databases were constructed in order to yield an original and systematic analysis of how the term “global citizenship” has been conceived and applied beyond academic debates in political philosophy and social science. First, more than 500 news articles published from late 1997 until the end of 1999 were catalogued into a database of published references to “global citizenship”. These published references were coded into numerous content categories, and interviews with 126 individuals associated with the public statements were conducted in order to yield further elaboration and clarification of their thoughts regarding “global citizenship”.\(^4\) The interviews took place from March 2000 to August 2001—a period that followed the protests in Seattle outside the World Trade Organization meeting in November 1999 and preceded the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The interview transcripts were compiled into a second database in which qualitative content analysis software\(^5\) was used to classify and order countless small passages of text into thematically and conceptually relevant categories. By using public communication of the term “global citizenship” as the starting point for analysis, this research strategy differed markedly from other contributions to the rapidly expanding literature regarding prospects for an international dimension of citizenship. While other contributions to the literature often propose specific categories of individuals as candidate “global citizens”—such as international migrants or transnational activists\(^6\)—this research focused primarily on the perceptions and observations of individuals who have chosen either to consider themselves as “global citizens” or to advocate “global citizenship” in politics or society.

First, this article explores how the civic republican discourse of “global citizenship” relates to citizen voice in terms of both the content of citizenship, as in political participation, social interaction or cross-cultural engagement; and the scale of citizenship, meaning that citizen voice can be projected either within domestic public space or across the international arena. In many instances, self-described “global citizens” call upon
the term to communicate senses of loyalty to humanity at large, especially persons trapped in poverty, displacement or oppression. Next, the article examines how a portion of the libertarian discourse of “global citizenship” essentially downgrades citizen voice and assigns priority instead to varying themes of mobility, displacement and exit from political engagement as elements of “global citizenship”. While some elements of the libertarian discourse suggest the opposite of both civic republican and liberal models of citizenship, the libertarian discourse also includes a strain of thinking oriented toward personal achievement that can be reconciled, at least partially, with the civic republican discourse. In this regard, all three pillars of Albert Hirschman’s (1970) theory of political economy—exit, voice and loyalty—can be identified in varying degrees within the evolving discourses of global citizenship.

The Civic Republican Discourse of Global Citizenship

In many respects, the civic republican discourse of “global citizenship” hearkens to ancient and medieval understandings of citizenship as self-rule. As written in The Politics by Aristotle, who held up participation in the public forum of Athens as “the most choiceworthy way of life”: “The good citizen should know and have the capacity both to be ruled and to rule, and this very thing is the virtue of a citizen—knowledge of rule over free persons from both (points of view)” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 1277b). While Aristotle believed that the ideal polis would contain no more than 10,000 inhabitants, in order to foster participation and deliberation among citizens who knew and trusted each other, Cicero placed emphasis on the rule of law to secure freedom and promote the common good in the much larger Roman Republic. Machiavelli reinvigorated civic republicanism during the Renaissance by casting political freedom as dependent on the strength of character among citizens and on the structuring of political institutions in ways that fragment power among competing interests and classes, thereby leaving no particular faction in complete control of the government; this line of thinking, also articulated by Harrington in seventeenth century Great Britain, helped set the stage for the deployment of republicanism in the founding of the United States.

In the present day, political and social theorists are divided as to whether or not civic republicanism can be partially deployed, at least, beyond the confines of nation-states. David Miller (1999) doubts that ample measures of motivation and responsibility would emerge among any sort of transnational citizenry and further argues that the challenge of defining constituencies to mediate conflicting interests would present formidable logistical problems in a nascent global polity. Other recent contributions to the debate are more sanguine. Gerard Delanty (2000, pp. 137–145) argues that a model of “civic cosmopolitanism”—in which values such as global justice and solidarity would be pursued within the civic ties of the nation rather than kept in abstraction from everyday political life—has the potential to serve as a bottom–up corrective for some of the consolidating forces of economic globalization. Iseult Honohan, meanwhile, maintains that even if the institution of citizenship might remain bounded largely within nation-states, the scale of political community nevertheless can be observed as in transition:

If republican politics is not tied to a nation, but can be constructed on local and European or other regional lines, it may also be possible to conceive of some development toward a cosmopolitan citizenship from the bottom up, through the
development of increasing webs of relationships or ranges of overlapping economic, environmental and cultural interdependencies, rather than depending on the prior existence of a world state based on _a priori_ principles of a universal humanity (Honohan, 2002, pp. 284–286).

The interpretation that civic republicanism can be at least partially deployed internationally, amid heightening public recognition of global interdependence, shares affinities with the moral cosmopolitanism of the ancient Stoics as well as the reflections of the self-described “global citizens” and advocates of “global citizenship” who contributed to this research. In many cases, interview respondents seemed to channel ideas of awareness, responsibility and participation into a trajectory when they shared their thoughts on how citizen voice and citizen action begin to transcend the nation-state. For example, consider the definition of a “global citizen” offered by an advocacy manager for the Australian affiliate of Oxfam:

> It would be an individual who has an understanding of the way a society operates at a global level, and having that understanding, that they interpret, for whatever reason, that they have some responsibility as an individual to take action to achieve social justice or equity or environmental sustainability. Somebody who is motivated for whatever reason to take action as opportunities arise on those sorts of issues.9

In these sorts of definitions of “global citizenship”, heightened awareness leads to an elevated sense of responsibility that in turn produces the motivation to project one’s voice as a “global citizen”. It will come as no surprise that many published references to “global citizenship” applied the term in the context of mobilization across borders and campaigns for reforming international economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Several transnational activists, in sharing their life histories during interviews, described how they discovered their voices as citizens initially in local or national political spheres and then eventually redeployed their voices internationally—hence illustrating how “global citizenship” cuts across domestic politics and the international arena and commonly originates within local communities. For instance, Hazel Henderson, an economic analyst, author and syndicated international newspaper columnist who recently has participated in the World Social Forum, first became active as a citizen in New York City politics during the mid-1960s, when she founded the group Citizens for Clean Air and took to the streets to protest industrial pollution. A young mother and housewife at the time, Henderson then worked with Ralph Nader to fight for environmental reforms within General Motors. She helped organize the first Earth Day in 1970 and wrote a _Harvard Business Review_ article (Henderson, 1968) on corporate responsibility, which yielded invitations from business schools worldwide to speak on what then was a new line of inquiry: business ethics. This international exposure led Henderson to the first United Nations environmental conference, held in 1972 in Sweden, that in Henderson’s mind brought together the global environmental movement for the first time. Her experiences at the conference and the contacts she made left Henderson thinking she was a “planetary pilgrim”, which she regards as a forerunner to the idea of a “global citizen”. “We were almost, as Jonas Salk had written at about the same time, he said that this was a completely new breed in the world. He said these are the people who for the first time in history, in the human species,
are taking responsibility for the whole human family on the planet. This was unprecedented. And so, I immediately self-identified. I thought, OK, that’s a good enough image to work off”.

For Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians, the trajectory of “global citizenship” started with the women’s movement within Canada. In the early 1980s, after working as the city of Ottawa’s first director of its office of equal opportunities for women, she left to join Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau as his senior advisor on women’s issues. From here, Barlow found herself drawn into a groundswell of protest against “trade without rules”, in her words, amid concern about the future of national health insurance and other Canadian social services especially relied upon by unmarried women. The Council of Canadians began strictly within the domestic arena to fight for Canadian social programs but entered international public debates during the 1990s. After an unsuccessful battle against the predecessor to the North American Free Trade Agreement, and then NAFTA itself, by 1997 Barlow’s attention had turned to the OECD-proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which the Canadian government at the time was supporting. Barlow and numerous other activists around the world launched a successful media campaign to stop the MAI, which they criticized as giving multinational corporations global rights without corresponding global responsibilities. “And I guess it was in that period that I stopped seeing this as simply me, as a Canadian, fighting this, but me, as part of a ‘global citizens’ movement, fighting economic globalization as it is now characterized.” Barlow says she thinks of herself as both an “unrepentant Canadian” and a “global citizen” and believes that global citizenship feeds into a strategy of articulating and protecting distinctly national interests and social programs, not subordinating them. Indeed, for Barlow, “global citizenship” amounts to a vigorous vocal defense of Canadian public space.

Among those “global citizen” activists who project their voices primarily in the international arena, citizen voice is commonly deployed for the purpose of calling for rules to manage the global economy. As Tomasz Terlecki, the executive director of CEE Bankwatch, framed his understanding of citizenship shortly after returning from the September 2000 meeting in Prague of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund: “I think I’ve achieved a situation that I know what kinds of actions are required for me, as a citizen of the world, to have a say in decision-making about my future and the future of the world . . . I already have been given a chance to talk with decision-makers. Now we can go one step further and try to have influence on who is a decision-maker”. Another leading transnational activist who went to Prague in September 2000, Anne Christine Habbard, the former secretary-general of the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights, framed “global citizenship” as centered on “the idea of where should we have, over what institution should we have democratic control, and what are the institutions that really decide over people’s lives and against whom we should organize some form of counterpower”. The goal of pressuring international institutions to become more directly accountable to an emerging global public signals how numerous critics of economic globalization are seeking more globalization, not less, in order to tame the capricious forces of unchecked global capitalism. For many transnational activists, “global citizenship” amounts to an ongoing uphill battle to create a lasting global public space.

Although relatively few self-described “global citizens” interviewed for this research equated or linked “global citizenship” directly with universal human rights, reform-seeking transnational activists were somewhat more inclined than other respondents to
claim that each human person is a “global citizen” by virtue of human rights. As a leading campaigner against world hunger put it: “For me, every human being is a ‘global citizen’, but some of their rights of citizenship are being denied to them if they’re going hungry”.13 Another activist, Kevin Danaher, the co-founder of Global Exchange, compared his work to “putting flesh on the bones of those basic principles” in both the United States Declaration of Independence and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.14 Likewise, a World Council of Churches campaigner who monitors negotiations on global climate change said that he believes citizenship, more generally, is conferred “on the basis of life”, and that likewise the Council’s “first commitment”, in his words, is to a “global community”.15 These sorts of statements from transnational activists illustrate how they often conceive of “global citizenship” not only in relation to their own work and the work of their fellow activists, but also in terms of a status that can be claimed by all human persons, regardless of their circumstances and regardless of whether or not all human persons have the capability, the resources and the access to project their voices as actively engaged citizens. For instance, in the eyes of Justice Louise Arbour, the present United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the foremost “global citizens” are refugees. As Justice Arbour emphasized in an interview: “The true global citizens, I think, continue to be invisible and voiceless”.16

While “global citizenship” as international participation obviously serves as a prevalent stream of thinking within the civic republican discourse, many other interview respondents situated the scale of participatory “global citizenship” within domestic politics and face-to-face interaction in local communities, especially in terms of engagement across cultures as well as efforts to translate lofty moral visions into common everyday habits. The organizer of a co-housing initiative oriented toward energy conservation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, noted that many of the participating individuals—“global citizens”, in her mind—could have afforded larger, more expensive houses, but that the community is “the embodiment of a philosophy that there’s a higher standard of living, both socially and spiritually, that can be achieved if we are willing to pull together and invest some time and effort into what the community needs and how we live. And I think that has global ramifications, because if we demonstrate that, then it’s there for other people to notice. That’s a statement of faith”.17 Making such a statement of faith through one’s living arrangement, while planted literally in one’s own backyard, serves as an interesting contrast to more directly political and transnational methods of projecting citizen voice.

Such observations serve to illustrate how standing up for one’s beliefs within any political community can be taken as a form of “global citizenship”. Perhaps some of the most potentially intimidating aspects of “global citizenship” are challenges close to home, such as raising one’s voice to confront bigotry. As noted by a London journalist with a local view of global citizenship as engagement across cultures: “I don’t think you necessarily have to step out of your village to be a global citizen. It just means things, like, if someone’s making a horrible racist or bigoted comment in the playground, just saying something about it. To me, those fairly small steps, they all make a world”.18 Taken together, the insights from the interview respondents show that “global citizenship”, within the civic republican discourse, often signifies forms of engagement that can be domestic and cross-cultural as well as international and political. Not only does “global citizenship” involve the quest to build global public space, but “global citizenship” also thrives within local public space.
The Libertarian Discourse of Global Citizenship

Citizen voice often takes a back seat in the libertarian discourse of “global citizenship” in favor of freedom of unimpeded movement across the globe, at least for some of the world’s most advantaged and achieving individuals. By emphasizing, at times, disengagement and detachment from political communities, this libertarian discourse departs from contemporary liberal conceptions of citizenship that emphasize “liberal virtues” such as justice, mutual respect and fair terms of social cooperation among freely-choosing individuals bound together through corresponding rights and duties widely shared, in principle, by citizens of constitutional democracies (Rawls, 1971, 1993; Macedo, 1990; Galston, 1991). Although the cosmopolitan ideal of regarding each human person as worthy of equal respect and concern can be interpreted as a global extrapolation of liberal principles, the libertarian strain of “global citizenship” discourse lends some degree of reinforcement for Richard Falk’s skeptical view that “the corporate embrace of globalism should perhaps not even be associated with citizenship as it posits and acknowledges no accompanying global community, and hence contains no bonds of solidarity with those who are weak and disadvantaged, or with people generally” (Falk, 2004, p. 181).

However, the insights shared by several interview respondents serve to offset Falk’s skepticism at least partially. Despite reservations that in practice, cosmopolitan citizenship seems to fit mainly the lifestyles and priorities of global elites, international mobility, in its own right, does not necessarily lead to disengagement from politics and society. Indeed, several executives of multinational corporations interviewed for this research who had worked overseas—and originally landed into the database of published references because of documents classified primarily within international mobility—were in fact engaged at least within the local communities in which they were temporarily implanted. For instance, Cynthia Hogan, an international marketing executive with Novartis AG who lived for several years in Basel, Switzerland, while assigned to corporate headquarters, served on the board of her daughter’s elementary school and volunteered on a community health program as well as an organization that helped English-speaking newcomers settle into town. Likewise, Rick Ellis, former chief executive of TV New Zealand, described in an interview how his family went about “nesting” in local communities during several years residing in the United Kingdom and in Australia:

When we live and work in the UK, particularly in London, which I prefer, we feel like we’re part of the UK. We pay our taxes, our kids go to school, we make friends, we have family there that we can visit on a weekend. When I’m there, I feel like I’m part of the place, so I guess once again, it’s an attitude of mind: that when you are in a location other than where you were originally born and brought up, if you feel like a citizen, then consider yourself a citizen.

Note that “nesting” requires neither a passport nor voting rights, two classic elements of national citizenship, though interestingly enough, Ellis referred to the mundane duty of paying taxes as one aspect of “nesting”. Mainly Ellis thinks of “nesting” in terms of immersing his family within the civic life of the community. Ellis, for instance, has volunteered with fund raising efforts at his children’s local schools, and he has made a point of sending the children to schools serving local families rather than schools geared
toward expatriates. Such elements of immersion into local community life abroad do not necessarily amount to citizen voice in an expressly political context, but they do illustrate how Ellis and his family chose to become active contributors to civic life in the communities where they stayed.

In contrast, several other executive expatriates interviewed for this research spoke candidly about feelings of displacement from their respective countries of origin. Lacking a sense of belonging, upwardly mobile professionals fill the void by forming allegiances to incomes, career prospects and networks of colleagues around the world. These sorts of individuals have no plans to trade in their national passports, but national citizenship is not at all salient in how they go about their lives. Moreover, “global citizenship”, for them, is a way of capturing a diminished sense of attachment toward their respective countries of origin. They tend to travel through life on different sorts of trajectories than the self-described “global citizens” whose ideas fit within the civic republican discourse that emphasizes ideas of awareness, responsibility and participation in politics and society.

Nava Swersky, a venture capitalist based in Tel Aviv, was one of several interview respondents who seemed to associate “global citizenship” with a sense of displacement as described above. After earning an MBA in Switzerland from the International Institute for Management Development, Swersky worked in Europe and in the United States for pharmaceutical giant Ciba-Geigy (which has since merged into Novartis) before making a transition into venture capital in San Francisco and returning to Tel Aviv in 1999. Although Swersky returned to Israel by choice, her experiences abroad have left her all the more convinced that she operates more like a European or a North American than an Israeli: “No, I’m not Israeli. I feel more foreign here than in many other places. As a business person, yes, I’m probably more global than anything else, except being not Israeli. I don’t know what I am anymore”.

Similarly, Miles Colebrook, group president of the advertising agency JWT International in London, expressed a sense of detachment from the United Kingdom, his native country. By the mid-1980s, as head of JWT’s operations across Europe, Colebrook traveled routinely across continental Europe and was spending progressively less time in London. This shift in his center of gravity appealed very much to Colebrook: “I very quickly then distanced myself from the UK and felt very European, very easy moving from country to country, and felt that I belonged to the world rather than any particular part of it”. Although Colebrook always has been based, at least officially, in London, he explained how he quite literally does not have a strong sense of place. When he travels on business—and he travels 60–70% of the time—“frequently I’ll wake up somewhere, and it takes me five minutes to work out, to remember where I am, and I don’t find that at all odd”. Colebrook added that when he flies into Heathrow Airport, “I don’t regard it as flying home. I regard it as flying into London”. Colebrook said that he regards himself as a “global citizen” and a European citizen much more than as a British citizen, though he also believes that part of being a “global citizen” is not thinking about such matters. At the time of his interview, in June 2000, Colebrook was responsible for JWT in Asia and in Europe and commonly spent weekends socializing with friends and colleagues in Shanghai or in Spain, the homeland of his spouse: “I personally find the phrase ‘global citizen’ perfectly comfortable. For me, it means that an individual feels they belong to a much bigger kind of global church and feels not just comfortable, but they feel pleasant about it and find the concept of moving effortlessly around the globe extremely easy to deal with”.23
While persons who articulate “global citizenship” in connection with a sense of displacement do not seem to divorce themselves entirely from their respective countries of origin, one extreme interpretation of “global citizenship” that turned up in a few of the published references centered on outright withdrawal from one’s country of citizenship. The most dramatic example of this surfaced in the writing of Canadian financial journalist Jonathan Chevreau, who has argued on multiple occasions that “global citizenship” involves uprooting national stakes primarily for the sake of monetary gain:

For those would-be wealthy international citizens of the world, the phrase “offshore” has almost magical power. Usually, the term is used in the context of taxes, as in offshore tax havens or offshore trusts. But offshore also is used to describe the unshackled investments of the new global citizen. In parallel with the explosive growth of onshore mutual funds, offshore investment funds have also been exploding at the rate of three new ones a day—with more than 14,000 worldwide. (Chevreau, 1999)

This statement, written in 1999 at the peak of an economic boom in the United States and Canada, suggests that wealthy “global citizens” ought to take responsibility for their investment portfolios but not necessarily for their fellow Canadians; “global citizenship” as offshore investing is symptomatic of a stark divide, at least in some strains of libertarian thinking, between the uninhibited pursuit of an affluent individual’s economic self-interest and the public good within one’s country of origin.

During an interview, Chevreau made it clear that his idea of global citizenship entails not only investing offshore, but also moving offshore to escape domestic taxation. In other words, “global citizens” secede from their homelands for the purpose of getting the most from their money elsewhere. As Chevreau described his thinking, he substituted the role of a customer for that of a citizen. He also compared the Canadian government with a robber, while likening offshore tax havens to businesses preoccupied with customer satisfaction.24 Following the idea of a “sovereign individual”, as advanced by libertarians James Davidson and William Rees-Mogg, Chevreau discarded as archaic and burdensome the idea of citizenship as a permanent tie linking together fellow members of a political community in favor of a radically individualistic model of unimpeded consumer choice.25 The implications for citizenship status, in this case, come into play when a Canadian closes out his or her retirement savings plan, takes the cash, pays an early withdrawal tax penalty to Canada, sells the house, and then, in Chevreau’s words, “basically disowns the country”.26 Chevreau said that these “global citizens”, in his view, usually spend summers in Canada and winters in their new legal domicile, typically in Florida, on Caribbean islands, or in Mexico. “They have a cottage in Canada and their grandchildren and the whole bit. So they still have their ties to Canada, mostly. But as far as the tax man’s concerned and their physical assets, they have severed their connection with their home country. They have become a global citizen.” Ultimately this idea of severing ties with one’s home country amounts to an allegiance primarily to one’s personal income and wealth. It also provides a fascinating living illustration of how Albert Hirschman’s notion of exit—in contrast with voice and loyalty—applies when broadly comparing the contours of the civic republican and libertarian discourses of “global citizenship” (Hirschman, 1970).
These two overarching discourses of “global citizenship” are not mutually exclusive, however. The libertarian discourse also includes a strain of thinking that emphasizes global competitiveness and personal achievement and can be regarded as congruent with notions of civic competence that converge with the civic republican tradition. Among the interview respondents, the articulation of “global citizenship” as achievement was particularly apparent in secondary education, as secondary school principals espousing “global citizenship” seemed acutely concerned that their students would advance to universities and reach sufficient technological proficiency to compete in the global marketplace.

For example, Father Bressani Catholic High School, located near Toronto, reconfigured its co-op program that long had placed students in jobs with local businesses. Traditional co-op placements had been in lumberyards, restaurants and retail stores and generally had not attracted the school’s brightest students. More recently, however, the program has reached out to more academically-motivated students and placed them into international law firms, international agencies (such as UNICEF) and high-tech corporations. At times, the students assigned to these organizations have learned startling lessons about the volatility of the global economy. One student, who went on to pursue a university degree in engineering, lost both of his supervisors at Bombardier when the aerospace corporation suddenly restructured its operations and immediately reassigned the engineers working with the student to offices in Montreal and in Wichita, Kansas. As former school principal Brian O’Sullivan recalled during an interview:

Here was a student seeing a major global aerospace company doing some restructuring, and from a relatively safe position on his part. He wasn’t an employee, but he was seeing basically the global economy flying out right in front of him. His reaction, initially was, “Well, this is annoying, I’ve got a new person (for a supervisor)”. Our reaction was, “stand back and watch this. You might be annoyed, but people’s careers are being shifted internationally here. Enjoy the view”.28

From the opposite corner of the world, at Southland Girls High School in Invercargill, New Zealand, former principal Linda Braun said that the term “global citizenship” entered her vocabulary in 1997, as the school began successfully recruiting Asian students from overseas, leading to a much more internationally mobile and culturally diverse student body. Despite the cultural transformation of the school, Braun associated “global citizenship” with notions of competence and competitiveness. Upon returning from an international conference for secondary school principals, held in 1998 in Helsinki, Finland, Braun told a local news reporter: “The message that is coming through very clearly is that technology, literacy and numeracy are the keys to global citizenship. We might be relatively isolated in New Zealand, but, through communication, through learning languages and through having an international outlook, we can keep pace with developments in places like Europe”.29

To help translate this international outlook into daily life, the school invested NZ$ 300,00030 in a computer network and located computer terminals in open public spaces rather than in enclosed classrooms. The school provided each student with unlimited Internet access and an email account—an amenity more common at universities than secondary schools and a move that placed Southland Girls technologically ahead of every other secondary school in the surrounding region. Braun also placed emphasis upon what...
she calls extracurricular “quadrants”—sporting activities, cultural activities, leadership, and service. These four “quadrants” encompass numerous clubs dedicated to local service projects, such as a swimming program that assists children with disabilities, as well as global issues, such as a chapter of Amnesty International.

All in all, Southland Girls High School now typically enrolls more than 30 students from China, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries. More than 90% of the school’s graduates go on to university education, and half of them become the first university graduates in their families. For the local New Zealand students, the experience of studying and living with a variety of students from overseas has become a central part of their secondary school education. Indeed, Braun believes that the presence of the Asian students is making it much more likely that local students from Southland will become “global citizens” themselves, both in terms of being professionally competitive and personally empathetic:

Apart from the obvious financial benefit for a rather average, struggling school, as far as money goes, one of the great benefits is we’re in a very isolated city at the bottom of the world, and it opens up our Southland girls’ eyes to the fact that there are different people in the world—different cultures, different ways of looking at the world, and that’s the world they’re going to be living and working in . . . I define global citizen as a girl from Southland, perhaps off a farm, being able to go and live and work in just about every country in the world and know that the universalities of human experience are going to be far greater in her modern world than the differences. And where the differences exist, she will be able to understand and respond to them.31

These sorts of moral visions—instilling in students both the capability to respond to differences and the willingness reconcile differences with commonalities—extend well beyond the libertarian discourse of “global citizenship” and illustrate how in many cases, agendas related to “global citizenship” and civic empowerment cut across multiple discourses.

Conclusion

The findings in this article illustrate how notions of “global citizenship” emerging in everyday life encompass myriad approaches with respect to the projection of citizen voice. Within the civic republican discourse, notions of citizen voice focus sometimes on transnational activism, sometimes on participation in domestic politics and society, and sometimes on cross-cultural empathy both at home and abroad. Within the libertarian discourse, some ideas of “global citizenship” emphasize displacement and even exit from any form of political engagement, while other strains of thinking frame “global citizenship” in terms of participation in local communities abroad as well as fostering specific skills and values in students. In short, not only has “global citizenship” emerged as a variant within the concept of citizenship, but the concept of “global citizenship” itself contains many variants and sources of internal division. How the concept of “global citizenship” continues to evolve in public discourse, especially in response to watershed events, promises to remain a fruitful line of inquiry for future research for years to come. Although the concept of “global citizenship” has a long way to go before becoming widely
resonant in the minds and voices of citizens even in the most affluent and democratic nation-states, global citizenship has taken hold within a small proportion of the population and competing understandings of “global citizenship” continue to proliferate in multiple discourses. One key common denominator across the discourses is this: the uncoupling of proximity from geography, and the willingness to situate oneself in communities that are not defined by geopolitical boundaries. As one respondent reflected during an interview:

I wouldn’t say “Oh, I feel at home everywhere”. I don’t. I just got back from China, and clearly there are cultural differences; or indeed, when I’m in Syria [home to her father’s side of the family], and I’m supposed to wear the veil; or in Afghanistan—I definitely wouldn’t feel at home in Afghanistan. But I would say I feel a planetary citizen in the sense that I feel concerned about what’s happening everywhere. I feel planetary in the sense that I don’t feel closer to the problems of France than I do to the problems of Burma . . . proximity is not defined by geography. So it’s in that sense that I feel planetary: the proximity that I feel and the closeness that I feel to people is not at all defined by culture or geography or citizenship.

Such an outlook shares an affinity with Martha Nussbaum’s ideal (1996, 1997) of a “world citizen” as one who places at least as much priority on the well-being of distant strangers as one’s next-door neighbors as well as Benjamin Barber’s pliable idea of citizenship (1984, p. 223) that places “expanding consciousness”, rather than geographical proximity, as the source of common bonds. Indeed, even if the individuals who fit in the libertarian discourse do not usually seem to share such lofty visions of moral responsibility, they nevertheless tended to think of themselves as belonging to communities—and claiming rights in communities—that transcended their countries of origin. Although the emphasis upon citizen voice is neither universally held nor articulated by all self-described “global citizens”, the idea of being part of a “global church” at least, as one respondent put it, does seem to reverberate across the board. One lingering question, therefore, is whether this growing recognition eventually will give civic republican ideals the upper hand more decisively in “global citizenship” discourses beyond the academy.

Notes

1 This is a revised version of a paper presented at the “Voice and Citizenship” conference held in April 2004 and sponsored by the Department of Communication at the University of Washington. I would like to thank the participants at the conference, particularly Philip Howard and Lance Bennett, for their helpful comments. I also wish to thank David Marquand, Anthony McGrew, Stuart White, the two anonymous reviewers for Citizenship Studies, as well as the interview respondents quoted in this article, whose insights have propelled my research forward.

2 Based on the Westlaw “All News Plus” database, published references to global citizenship and its cognates in English increased in absolute terms by 1055% from 1991 to 2000—by far the most dramatic increase in usage compared with similar keyword combinations such as world citizenship, international citizenship, planetary citizenship and earth citizenship. When accounting for increases in all published references to “citizenship” during the same time period, published references to global citizenship increased by 335% (Schattle, 2004).


4 The interviews were conducted by telephone, and full, unedited transcripts were produced for each interview. All respondents who contributed to this research agreed to be quoted by name.
Confidentiality was not offered, since practically all of the individuals who gave interviews for this project had made statements in public with regard to global citizenship.

5 QSR-NUDIST, which stands for Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorizing, Release 4.0. For a good explanation of the origins of the software and its rationale, see Richards and Richards (1994).

6 For examples of this approach, see Falk (1994) and Urry (2000).

7 J. G. A. Pocock provides an exhaustive account how Machiavelli strengthened the republican tradition by framing the polity itself as an essential structuring principle of civic virtue “in which every citizen’s ability to place the common good before his own was the precondition of every other’s” (Pocock, 1975, p. 184).

8 For a comprehensive overview of the historical development of civic republican ideals and their applicability to political institutions and practices, see Honohan (2002).

9 Interview with James Ensor, advocacy manager, Community Aid Abroad, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 9 October 2000.

10 Interview with Maude Barlow, chair, the Council of Canadians, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 19 April 2000.

11 Interview with Tomasz Terlecki, executive director, CEE Bankwatch, Krakow, Poland, 13 November 2000.


13 Interview with Peter Rosset, former co-director, Food First/the Institute for Food and Development Policy, Chiapas, Mexico, 15 February 2001. Rosset is now a researcher at Centro de Estudios para el Cambio en el Campo Mexicano (Center for the Study of Rural Change in Mexico).


15 Interview with David Hallman, climate change program coordinator, World Council of Churches; program officer for energy and environment, United Church of Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 25 June 2001.

16 Interview with Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 10 January 2001. At the time of her interview, Justice Arbour was serving on the Supreme Court of Canada, and recently had finished her tenure as chief prosecutor for the United Nations war crimes tribunals on Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

17 Interview with Gwen Noyes, real estate developer, Cambridge, MA, USA, 18 June 2000.


19 In the eyes of some critics, the ascendancy of the new cosmopolitan elite class has imperiled the very essence of democratic citizenship. As Christopher Lasch lamented (1995, p. 6): “The new elites are home only in transit, en route to a high-level conference, to the grand opening of a new franchise, to an international film festival or an undiscovered resort. Theirs is essentially a tourist’s view of the world—not a perspective likely to encourage a passionate devotion to democracy”. Likewise, Craig Calhoun (2002, p. 108) worries that cosmopolitanism weakens traditional forms of solidarity in local and national communities without bringing about new robust forms of solidarity: “If cosmopolitan democracy is to be more than a good ethical orientation for those privileged to inhabit the frequent traveler lounges, it must put down roots in the solidarities that organize most people’s sense of identity and location in the world”.

20 Interview with Cynthia Hogan, regional sales manager, Novartis AG, East Hanover, NJ, USA, 2 October 2000.

21 Interview with Rick Ellis, former chief executive officer, Television New Zealand, Auckland, New Zealand, 12 October 2000.

22 Swersky’s cohort included 62 students from 27 countries and had no dominant culture: “There was something about that that I found extremely appealing: it was sort of getting beyond the cultural barrier—sort of creating something that was truly global. That’s always been fascinating to me” (Interview with Nava Swersky, venture capitalist, Columbine Capital Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel, 10 October 2000).

23 Interview with Miles Colebrook, group president, JWT International, London, UK, 26 July 2000. Colebrook has since retired.
24 Interview with Jonathan Chevreau, financial journalist, National Post, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 6 April 2000.

25 As Davidson and Rees-Mogg (1997, p. 373) have advised their readers: “Citizenship is obsolete. To optimize your lifetime earnings and become a Sovereign Individual, you will need to become a customer of a government or protection service rather than a citizen. Instead of paying whatever tax burden is imposed upon you by grasping politicians, you must place yourself in a position to negotiate a private tax treaty that obliges you to pay no more for services of government than they are actually worth to you”.

26 As of April 2000, when Chevreau was interviewed, the Canadian taxation rate on retirement savings plans was 25% for early withdrawal, compared with 50% upon retirement, making it, in Chevreau’s view, a “relative bargain” to take the money and run.

27 As van Gunsteren has observed, in linking notions of individual competence with civic ideals: “A chairman who does not break the rules but is otherwise incompetent in presiding over and guiding a meeting can be a disaster . . . Goodwill and a consensus on norms and values, which have a central place in many discourses on ‘feelings’ of citizenship, are not enough” (van Gunsteren 1998, pp. 24–25, 27).

28 Interview with Brian O’Sullivan, principal, Father Bressani Catholic High School, Woodbridge, Ontario, Canada, 28 September 2000. O’Sullivan is now on the faculty of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

29 Linda Braun, quoted in “Principal urges international outlook”, The Southland Times, 28 July 1999. Braun has since retired.

30 This is equivalent to approximately US$175,000.


32 All interviews for this research were conducted before the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and the end of the Taliban rule over Afghanistan. This interview occurred in June 2001.

33 Habbard interview (supra note 12).

34 Habbard’s comments also amount to an indirect rejoinder to Michael Walzer’s critical reply to Nussbaum that fundamental citizen allegiances ought to start at the center, in one’s most immediate political community, and that moral commitments beyond the nation are not “citizen-like commitments” (Walzer, 1996, p. 126). And yet, the observations from many respondents in this article also highlight the gap between individuals adopting a sense of “global citizenship” for themselves—within whichever communities they are situated—and the development of global institutional structures that would render a more entrenched model of cosmopolitan citizenship.

35 Colebrook interview (supra note 23).

References

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