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The globalmindedness of graduating seniors by gender and ethnicity in six North Florida public high schools

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we examined gender and ethnicity differences in globalmindedness among graduating seniors in six North Florida public high schools. Using a mixed method design, we administered 1096 globalmindedness surveys and conducted 59 one-on-one interviews measuring the five globalmindedness dimensions of responsibility, interconnectedness, globalcentrism, cultural pluralism, and efficacy. Females scored significantly higher on all five dimensions of globalmindedness than their male counterparts on the globalmindedness survey; however, the interview results revealed a higher level of globalmindedness among females only on the dimensions of responsibility and efficacy. African-American students possessed a higher level of globalmindedness in the dimensions of efficacy and interconnectedness than their European-American counterparts in both the survey and interview data. The interview results also revealed a higher level of globalmindedness among African-American students in the dimensions of responsibility and cultural pluralism, a difference not seen in the survey data. We discuss the need for further globalmindedness research with graduating high school students, with special attention to the dimensions of globalmindedness that did not align in the survey and interview data. The implications of the findings for educators seeking to teach from a global perspective are addressed.

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Educating shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

[United Nations General Conference, 1948](#)

As the relentless forces of globalization sweep across the planet to the farthest corners of Earth, no nation seems to remain untouched by their reach. The technological revolution is touching billions of people's lives, reverberating in a collective consciousness as to the role individuals, organizations, institutions, and nations play in a rapidly changing, increasingly interconnected world (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2009; Tye, 2009). Globalization has significantly "altered the civic landscape, making discourse on exclusively nation-state education an anachronism of the twentieth century" (Gaudelli, 2007, p. 1). In fact, the impact of globalization on humanity necessitates a paradigm shift in education that will empower youth in the United States and other nations with a deeper knowledge of the world, a positive attitude toward those perceived as different, and a sense of responsibility to the world community.

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Purpose of study

We investigated the gender and ethnic differences in globalmindedness of a large sample of graduating seniors in six public high schools in North Florida. In gaining insight into the global attitudes of a diverse group of North Florida students, we hoped to generate new understandings that might inform educational efforts to foster globalmindedness—a disposition involving global knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are essential in a multicultural society and globalized world.

One purpose of this study, then, was to meet our intellectual curiosity about the globalmindedness of graduating high school seniors in particular because the educational accountability and standards movements have largely pre-empted classroom instruction designed to cultivate a global perspective. A second purpose of our study was to address the paucity of research in the global education literature on gender and ethnicity¹ differences in the globalmindedness of graduating high school seniors. Researchers across the world have identified gender differences in various global attitudes and knowledge, yet these investigations have not fully examined globalmindedness differences in male and female students, nor between different ethnic groups. Such knowledge is essential given that many U.S. students do not demonstrate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills critical for global citizenship in the 21st century.

Contemporary global education literature confirms our concerns about the lack of globalmindedness among U.S. youth. Despite increasing global interconnectivity (Khanna, 2016) among nations, many young Americans have limited knowledge of the cultures, histories, geographies, and issues of the world—and a significant number believe it is not essential to know more about the world (Green, 2008; Manzo, 2006; Myers, 2010). Moreover, in a survey by the *Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project* (2012) 55% of U.S. respondents eighteen years and older agreed with the statement, “Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others.” In addition, whereas 66% to 76% of adults surveyed in Britain, France, Germany, and Spain agreed that their country should obtain approval from the United Nations Security Council before using military force to address international threats, only 45% of Americans agreed with the statement (*Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project*, 2012). These U.S. attitudes are reinforced by the tendency of our educational systems to support the primacy of national sovereignty exemplified in U.S. social studies curriculum scholarship (Gaudelli, 2007).

According to the *Asia Society* (2003), most major problems facing our country today require that each young person learns more about other regions, cultures, and languages in the world. A lack of globalmindedness among youth suggests the presence of a narrowly defined nationalism, reinforced to the extent that “the curriculum of all schools of the world are nationalistic” (Tye, 2009, p. 3). To the contrary, an attitude of globalmindedness has been associated with less ethnocentric bias, a positive attitude toward the world’s people, greater empathy for others from different cultures, and the expectation of complexity in the world (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2001; Kirkwood-Tucker, Morris & Lieberman, 2011; Kolker, Sheina & Ustinova, 2009).

Global education programs in the United States have been found to be primarily available in suburban schools with middle- and upper-income students rather than in schools in poor districts with students from lower economic background (Myers, 2014), yet the impact of such disparities on the worldviews of students has not been widely investigated. Although global educators may frequently discuss people who are different from the ethnic majority in the United States, researchers in the field typically have not conducted empirical studies investigating differences in globalmindedness between ethnic groups, particularly differences between white European-American students and American students of color. We believe that the results of this study will help to illuminate the actual global attitudes and understandings of a diverse student population and can provide teachers with a methodology to more effectively preparing all students for the global age.

Research questions

The following research questions framed our study: (1) What gender differences exist in the globalmindedness of graduating seniors in six North Florida public high schools? and (2) What ethnicity differences exist in the globalmindedness of graduating seniors in six North Florida public high schools?

Definition and theoretical framework

In the global education literature, the meaning of globalmindedness has assumed multiple meanings and is often interpreted differently by scholars depending on their perspective on the extant world and its people and the global issues they perceive to be the most pervasive in the global age. Some scholars define globalmindedness to mean global awareness, global attitudes, or global perspectives (Case, 1993; Hanvey, 1976). Other scholars have used critical global perspectives (Subedi, 2010), worldmindedness (Carano, 2010; Sampson & Smith, 1957), cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2006; Nussbaum, 2002), and worldview (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2009; Zong, Wilson, & Quashiga, 2008) to mean globalmindedness. In this study,

¹ Rather than use the contested term “race” (Tate & Audette, 2001) we instead chose “ethnicity” to represent an affiliation that “arises from inside a group [through] a process of self-definition” (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009, p. 215). Accordingly, we asked students to self-identify as European American, African American, Hispanic, or “Other” although we recognize that these terms fail to capture the complexity of these often-contested, still evolving socio-cultural conceptions (Jandt, 2012).

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