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# Gender Differences in Transnational Youth's Perceptions of Global Citizenship Education

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**Abstract**

An increasing number of K-12 schools and educational organizations in the U.S. emphasize Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in their curricula. As a kind of social studies education, GCE is often marketed as an effective means to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to succeed in our unpredictable, challenging future. However, there is little research on how students, the target audience, perceive and may be influenced by GCE. As such, this study explores how transnational high school students in the U.S. respond to the GCE to which they are exposed and whether and how these views differ by their gender, racial, and socioeconomic identities. Through descriptive statistics, the data show that when students engaged with GCE, they 1) perceived themselves to learn more skills and conceptual understandings rather than factual knowledge, 2) perceived their schools' formal curricula and diversity at school to contribute most to their learning, and 3) were influenced to change more in their thinking, not actions. These findings raise questions about how to balance teaching skills and knowledge, as well as GCE's challenge in promoting critical action. Further, based on t-tests and ANOVA, the data show that girls perceived themselves to learn more global citizenship at school, that more aspects of school contributed to their GCE, and that GCE influenced their lives more significantly, compared with boys. While the study did not find statistically significant differences in participant perspectives based on socioeconomic status, it did show that in terms of racial differences, Asian transnational students saw themselves as being the least influenced by GCE, compared with White and other students of Color. Given these findings, further research is required to explore how GCE may be implemented more equitably for diverse students.

***Keywords:*** *Curriculum, global citizenship education, high school students, social studies education, transnational youth*

## Introduction

There is currently a proliferation of research on global citizenship education (GCE), a kind of curriculum that often aims to teach students certain knowledge, skills, and values. As a kind of social studies education, although GCE is often heralded as an effective means to prepare children and youth to confront the complex and unexpected challenges of the future (Oxfam, 2015; UNESCO, 2014), it is not clear whether or how GCE is doing so. Much of the existing GCE literature consists of curricular models (Andreotti, 2014; UNESCO, 2014) or empirical studies that

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explore how adults—teachers and administrators—understand or implement GCE (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Bates, 2013; Brunold-Conesa, 2010; Cambridge, 2017; Carber, 2009; Goren & Yemini, 2016; Hahn, 2015; Hall, 2015; Hayden et al., 2003; Myers, 2010; Saada, 2013; Tamatea et al., 2008). Few studies have focused on the perspectives of youth, the intended subjects of GCE. To add to the field, this paper investigates United States (U.S.) high school students' perspectives on what GCE entails and how it influences their lives.

In addition to youths' understandings of GCE, this study explores how such understandings may differ based on three major identities: socioeconomic status (SES), gender, and race. Across the board, U.S. residents, and particularly youth, are increasingly more diverse (Frey, 2020). On the other hand, education scholarship has clearly shown that in the U.S., the intersecting identities of race, gender, and SES shape the nature and quality of students' educational experiences (Allen et al., 2018; Anyon, 1980; Ferguson, 2000; Ferri & Connor, 2014; Rothstein, 2009; Scott & White, 2013; Shedd, 2015). As such, this study investigates how high school youths' perceptions of the GCE to which they are exposed may also differ based on these identities. By foregrounding the views of students, whom GCE is meant to benefit, as well as highlighting how GCE might be taken up differently by youth of different identities, this study can inform the future development and improvement of GCE curricula so that they are better aligned with the needs and interests of not only transnational youth but all young people.

## Literature Review

### Global Citizenship Education

#### *Curricular Models*

Although there is no universal definition of GCE (Ashraf et al., 2021), it can generally be understood as a kind of social studies curriculum that is often associated with knowledge such as human rights and environmental issues, international relations, and languages and cultures, values including empathy, open-mindedness, and commitment to social justice, and skills like critical thinking, research, and public speaking. There are many existing models. For example, Oxfam (2015) and UNESCO (2014) emphasize the teaching of knowledge, skills, and values, which will help young people participate in a globalized society and economy; although both organizations refer to GCE's potential to contribute to peace, sustainability, and justice, the focus is on the growth and development of the individual. Noddings (2005) and Banks (2004, 2009) similarly highlight

universal values. Other models, such as Gaudelli's (2016), push back against the emphasis on knowledge and skills and instead advocate for systemic change. Along similar lines, Andreotti's (2014) model of critical GCE highlights "complex structures, systems, [and] assumptions" as the bases for inequality, justice, and exploitation and encourages individuals to "imagine different futures" (pp. 28-29).

***High School Students' Understanding of GCE***

Given the various curricular approaches to GCE, a key question for this study is how high school students take up this kind of education. In reviewing 30 empirical studies, I used Stein's (2015) model for four conceptualizations of global citizenship, as applied to education, to organize the findings on how high school students understand and experience GCE. These positions are entrepreneurial, liberal-humanist, anti-oppressive, and incommensurable, to be elaborated upon below.

In an overwhelming majority of 21 out of 30 studies, youth took up Stein's (2015) liberal humanist point of view. Within this group, two papers reported that students saw the purpose of GCE as helping them gain knowledge about the world and national/cultural others (Niens & Reilly, 2012; Yamashita, 2006). Thirteen studies reported that students saw GCE as a means to cultivate skills such as intercultural understanding, personal qualities such as empathy and care for others, and identities as global citizens (Allan & Charles, 2015; Angwenyi, 2014; Bachen et al., 2012; DeNobile et al., 2014; Edge & Khamsi, 2012; Law & Ng, 2009; Massey, 2014; Moffa, 2016; Myers, 2008, 2010; Niens & Reilly, 2012; Saperstein, 2019; Thorley & Davis, 2017). Six papers in the liberal humanist group suggested that the way youth understand GCE may vary based on their identities, such as SES and gender (Cheng & Yang, 2019; Johnson et al., 2011; O'Sullivan & Smaller, 2013; Tormey & Gleeson, 2012) and relationship with the host nation where they live (Myers & Zaman, 2009; Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018). Gender difference is the focus of this paper and is elaborated upon in the Gender Difference section below.

Next, in six out of 30 papers, students took up GCE based on Stein's (2015) entrepreneurial position and saw GCE as education that allows them to become competitive and successful workers in a global market; specifically, the students understood and experienced GCE as a means to an end (preparation for university and/or work), as a way to gain key skills such as critical thinking and literacy, as well as other skills (research, communication, academic/language skills), and finally, to develop personal characteristics such as independence and confidence (An, 2011;

Keßler et al., 2015; Loh, 2013; Resnik, 2012; Tarc & Beatty, 2012; Young, 2017). Third, only students from three out of the 30 papers reviewed understood GCE from an anti-oppressive position (Stein, 2015). From this position, GCE helped students see how global systems of power and distribution of resources are both unequal and inequitable, encouraging them to advocate for structural change (Arshad-Ayaz et al., 2017; Rodeheaver et al., 2014; Shultz et al., 2017). Finally, none of the students in the 30 studies reviewed took up GCE from Stein's (2015) incommensurable position; this is understandable, as this position is highly abstract, calling for explorations of "what it might mean to breach the current ordering of the world without prescribing exactly the outcome" (p. 258).

**Transnational Youth**

For the larger research project of which this study was a part, I recruited participants who were transnational youth. I defined transnational students as youth who identify with and maintain sustained attachments with people, goods, ideas, and cultural practices across national lines (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Shirazi, 2018), operationalized as U.S. high school students who had lived in at least one other country. Although many young people around the world are exposed to GCE, my choice of transnational youth was an attempt to focus on one group whose cross-cultural backgrounds make them especially vulnerable but also particularly ready to negotiate the complexities of the multiple allegiances that exist in their lives. While the participants' characteristic of being transnational youth did not serve a central analytic purpose in the present study, this background helped me make sense of some of the findings, as detailed in the Discussion and Implications section.

**Gender Differences**

In addition to exploring high school students' perspectives of GCE, this study examined how their identities may influence these views. Only two existing studies looked specifically at gender and GCE and found substantive differences between boys and girls. Based on over 2,500 students in Ireland, Tormey and Gleeson (2012) found that there was a "significantly greater gap between rhetoric and reality" in boys' schools, compared with girls' and co-educational schools (p. 641). Teachers and administrators at boys' schools were most likely to say that their institutions had a strong focus on GCE, followed by girls' schools, then co-educational schools. However, boys

reported the lowest levels of exposure to GCE, compared with girls, who more readily said they were taught GCE concepts such as "aid, development, fair trade, international debt, hunger and famine" and had relevant extracurricular opportunities (p. 641). The authors argued that despite all school types sharing a common formal curriculum, girls' schools were giving their students more GCE. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2011) explored how middle school students' "*knowledge* of, *interest* in, and *skills* in global issues" (p. 503) changed following a five-week simulation program. Based on pre- and post-simulation surveys, Johnson et al. found that girls registered higher interest in global issues than boys, regarding the simulation's ability to cultivate skills such as global citizenship (e.g., communication, negotiation), female students reported an increase while males a decrease. On the other hand, boys and girls exhibited a similar increase in knowledge. In terms of the decrease in skills for boys, the authors hypothesized that perhaps male students were more confident in their skills before the simulation but realized throughout the program that they were not as competent as they had assumed.

Relatedly, although not specifically focused on GCE, studies on gender differences in adolescent civic engagement have found that girls seemed more civically engaged than boys; girls' civic engagement placed more emphasis on community activities, including being more inclined towards the care ethic and participating in community service, while boys were more politically-oriented, such as being more interested in participating in "hard politics" (i.e. voting, running for office), and learning political knowledge and facts (Baker, 2009; Da Silva et al., 2004; Gaby, 2017; Munck et al., 2018; Schulz et al., 2010). Overall, my study echoes the literature in that girls were more interested in and influenced by GCE but did not find them to be less politically oriented.

## Methodology

### Research Design and Participants

This paper is based on quantitative survey data collected in 2021, which was part of a larger study (Teachers College, Columbia University IRB #20-383). The research questions were as follows:

1. Which aspects of global citizenship do transnational high school students learn at school?
2. How do various aspects of school contribute to transnational students' understanding and experience of GCE?
3. How does GCE influence the lives of transnational students?

4. How do transnational students' GCE experiences differ based on their gender, racial, and socioeconomic identities?

A survey was distributed via Qualtrics to answer the research questions, and the questions were answered anonymously online from March to June 2021. I recruited participants using non-random, purposeful theoretical sampling, seeking those who had "experienced the central phenomenon or key concept being explored" (Creswell & Clark, 2018, p. 178). In this case, I recruited youth aged 14-19 who attended high school in the U.S. and were exposed to GCE at school, in extracurricular activities, or through other means. I contacted organizations that did work related to GCE and teachers who worked at schools that taught GCE and asked them to send information about the project to their students. I also posted the survey to personal and professional networks, including LinkedIn and the Comparative and International Education Society, of which I am a member.

The survey yielded 114 responses, but only 33 were complete. Participant recruitment was challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic; in addition, since the survey was anonymous, it was not possible to follow up on incomplete forms. With 33 completed surveys, although the small sample size is a limitation of this study, it meets the assumptions of descriptive statistics, the t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Again, the survey participants were youth who attended high schools in the U.S. and had exposure to GCE. Of the 33 participants, 17 were female and 16 were male. Based on a composite SES score, explained in the Data Collection section below, 13 students were in the higher SES category, and 20 were in the lower. For race/ethnicity, the biggest groups represented consisted of Asian students (15), followed by those who identified as White (11), with a few students who identified as being Black/African American or of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Other than gender, SES, and race, a few other demographic traits characterized the students: most were in the 11th and 12th grades, under 18 years of age, and attended private schools. They spoke 14 different languages at home and were highly linguistically and culturally diverse. The biggest language group was Chinese/Mandarin speakers (7). At home, 14 students spoke a single language other than English, two spoke two languages other than English, and 17 students spoke English and another language.

**Data Collection**

The survey consisted of five sections; please see the full survey in the appendix. Section one had 12 items and collected participants' demographic information, which included measures of their SES, grade level, school type, and racial and gender identities. The SES measure was operationalized using a composite scale that I developed from Atlay et al. (2019) and Perry et al. (2016), calculated from parental/guardian levels of education and resources/items available in the home, such as whether the student had a room of their own, a fast internet connection, and works of art and literature.

Sections two, three, and four collected student perspectives in response to the first three research questions. The major question in section two (hereafter referred to as Q18) asked students to rate, on a four-point scale from "a lot" to "not at all," how much eight aspects of GCE they learned from school. Some of these aspects included "current events," "relationships between countries," and "empathy, care, and kindness." The other two questions in this section were open-ended and asked, "As you think about what global citizenship means to you, are there things that you learn at school?" and "Is there anything that your school teaches about global citizenship that you disagree with or have questions about?" Responses in this section addressed the first research question, "Which aspects of global citizenship do transnational high school students learn at school?"

The major question in section three asked respondents to rate 10 aspects of school in terms of how they contributed to the students' understanding and experience of global citizenship (hereafter referred to as Q22). Some of the aspects of school were "student-run clubs," "community service," and "the views and actions of classmates/friends," and these were rated on a four-point scale from "strong influence" to "no influence," with an option to select "we don't have this." This question was followed by an optional open-ended question asking whether other aspects of school contributed to the respondents' understanding and experience of GCE. The third item in this section attempted to understand how respondents perceived the state of GCE at school; seven statements were provided, for example, "My school teaches a good amount of global citizenship" and "I don't know much about what my school teaches about global citizenship," and students were asked to select all true statements. This question was followed by an optional open-ended item asking if there were ways outside of school that the respondents learned about being a global

citizen. Responses in this section addressed the second research question, "How do various aspects of school contribute to transnational students' understanding and experience of GCE?"

The major question in section four asked respondents to rate, on a five-point scale from "strong influence" to "no influence," the extent to which 10 GCE aspects influenced their lives (hereafter referred to as Q29). Some of these items included "learn about various countries, people, cultures, and languages," "want to work for an international company or organization," and "be more concerned about equity and justice." This was followed by an optional open-ended question that asked whether there were other ways GCE influenced the respondents' lives. Responses to this section addressed the third research question, "How does GCE influence the lives of transnational students?" The fifth section of the survey asked respondents to select one of three organizations to which I would give a small donation for their participation.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the survey, several steps were taken. Content validity was established through an extensive review of the literature. Further, construct validity was sound, because the survey was designed based on findings from a pilot study and a full qualitative study (Bradt, 2023), where student responses directly shaped the questions and sub-questions. Reliability was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency for the three major questions of the survey, yielding scores of 0.70 (Q 22), 0.84 (Q22), and 0.90 (Q29), which suggest that these measures have a moderate to high level of reliability.

**Data Analysis**

There were three main questions on the survey, which measured 1) How much various aspects of GCE students perceived themselves to learn at school (Q18), 2) The extent to which various aspects of school contributed to students' understanding and experience of GCE (Q22), and 3) The extent to which GCE influenced students' lives in various ways (Q29). Demographic data allowed me to determine whether student perspectives on these three questions differed based on gender, SES, and race. Please note that for practical and theoretical purposes, I collapsed the eight options for race/ethnicity on the survey into three categories: White, Asian, and Other People of Color. Practically, the reduction of racial categories was necessary for the ANOVA. Theoretically, the combination into three categories was based on my earlier findings that Asian students may have views about GCE that are different from those of other youth of Color (Bradt, 2023), as well as the literature on the Model Minority Stereotype (Kiang et al., 2017; Qin et al., 2008), which

suggests that Asians, in the U.S., may perceive themselves to be different from other People of Color.

Using Excel, I conducted descriptive statistical analyses of the data, generating tables to show demographic information of the 33 respondents, including the number of students in each grade level, 9-12, students who were under 18 and 18 or older, the breakdown of students' racial and gender identities, the types of schools respondents attended, the languages the students spoke at home, and the breakdown of lower and higher SES students. For the three major questions, Q18, Q22, and Q29, I calculated the average scores for all students, ranking the items from highest to lowest.

Then, I analyzed the data to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in student perspectives based on gender, SES, and race/ethnicity, which would demonstrate how transnational youth's identities may have played a role in how they took up GCE. One t-test compared the mean scores of lower and higher SES students, and a second t-test compared those of female and male students. I also ran a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean scores of students by race/ethnicity, for those identifying as White, Asian, and Other People of Color. Finally, I returned to statistically significant differences (all three questions for gender and Q29 for race/ethnicity) and created descriptive data tables and box plots for further analysis, some of which are included in this paper.

## Findings

### Summary

The major questions on the survey measured, 1) How much various aspects of GCE students perceived themselves to learn at school (Q18), 2) The extent to which various aspects of school contributed to students' understanding and experience of GCE (Q22), and 3) The extent to which GCE influenced students' lives in various ways (Q29). The data showed that students a) perceived themselves to learn more skills and conceptual understandings rather than factual bodies of knowledge in the GCE to which they were exposed at school, b) felt what contributed most to their sense of being a global citizen were both the planned formal curricula of their schools as well as the rich and diverse backgrounds and perspectives of members of their school communities, and c) were more influenced to change in their thinking instead of their actions.

In terms of differences by student identities, the most salient pattern from the data points to gender differences. Descriptive statistics showed that female students, on average, scored higher than male students for each of the items in all three questions, and t-tests confirmed that this gender difference is statistically significant. An ANOVA also revealed a difference based on students' race/ethnicity, that Asian students scored statistically significantly lower than students identifying as White and Other People of Color.

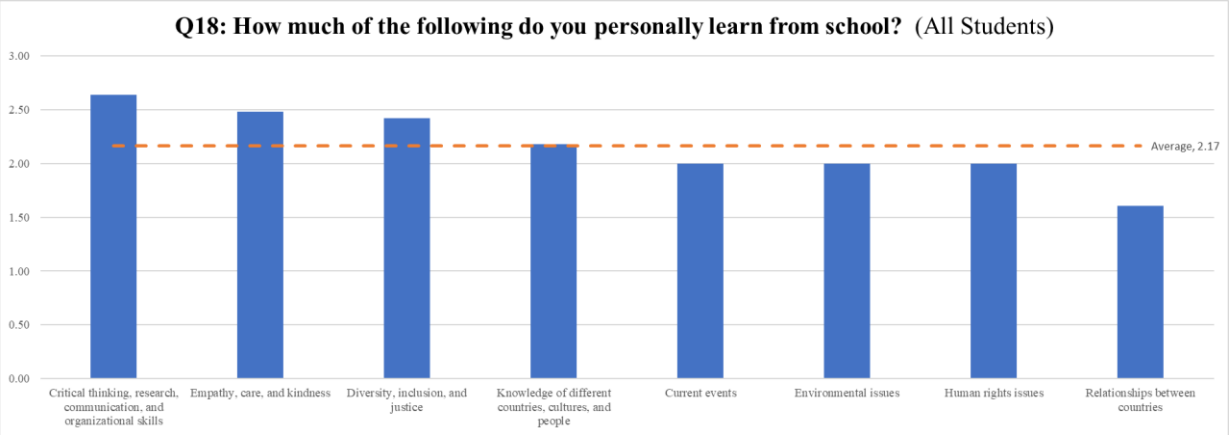
**Q18: Making Meaning of GCE**

This question asked, "Each of the following is something you might learn as a part of global citizenship education. How much of the following do you personally learn from school?" Eight items were rated on a four-point scale. Graph 1 displays the average scores on the eight items in descending order. The students averaged a score of between two and three for seven out of the eight items, indicating that they felt they learned *some* of these aspects of GCE at school; on one item, "relationships between countries," students scored between one and two, indicating that they only learn *a little* of this.

The students reflected that at school, they learned the most (about) "critical thinking, research, communication, and organizational skills," "empathy, care, and kindness," and "diversity, inclusion, and justice."

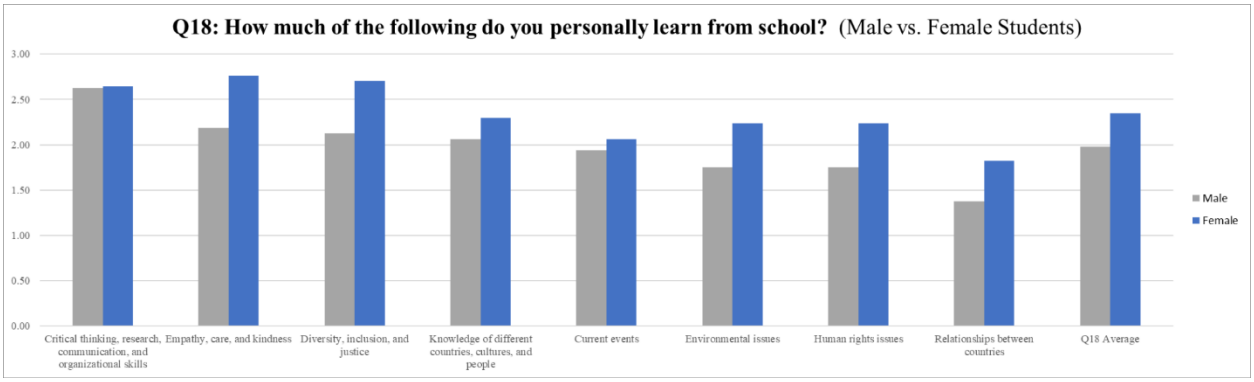
**Graph 1**

*Question 18 Overall Mean*



## Graph 2

*Question 18 Male vs. Female Means*




In Graph 2, the sub-items of Q18 are ordered from highest to lowest, based on the average score of all students. Graph 2 shows that girls scored higher across each of the eight aspects of GCE. A t-test comparing the scores for male and female students confirmed a statistically significant difference in the means of the two groups at the p = 0.05 level. In other words, the 17 female students (M = 2.35, SD = 0.43), compared to the 16 male students (M = 1.98, SD = 0.42), demonstrated significantly higher scores, t(31) = 2.50, p = 0.018, indicating that female students perceived themselves to learn more of the eight listed items as a part of their GCE at school. This question has a good level of internal reliability, indicating that the eight items worked well together to measure responses to Q18 overall, with Cronbach's alpha at $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ = 0.70 (Cohen et al., 2015; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Table 1 summarizes the t-test results for gender differences for the three main questions of the survey.

## Table 1

*Independent t-tests for Gender Difference*

| | Female (n=17) | Male (n=16) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Mean (SD) | Mean (SD) | DF | t-statistic | p-value [a] | Cohen's *d* |
| Q18 Scale | 2.35 (0.43) | 1.98 (0.42) | 31 | 2.50 | .018* | 0.90 |
| Q22 Scale | 2.56 (0.84) | 2.07 (0.78) | 31 | 1.71 | .097** | 0.62 |
| Q29 Scale | 3.19 (0.69) | 2.63 (0.81) | 29 | 2.10 | .044* | 0.78 |

[a] Note: P-values are based on an independent two-samples t-test.
* Statistically significant at the p = 0.05 level
** Statistically significant at the p = 0.10 level

Furthermore, of the eight items in this question, the gaps between male and female scores were smallest for those that had to do with skills and conceptual understandings and largest for those regarding (factual) knowledge. The reader might recall that overall, the respondents scored highest on the items related to skills and understandings: "critical thinking, research, communication, and organizational skills" and "empathy, care, and kindness," and girls' and boys' scores for these items showed the smallest differences (0.12 and 0.23 respectively). In contrast, for "diversity, inclusion, and justice," along with the remaining five items, which had to do with having a concrete base of (factual) knowledge, the gender differences were much larger (ranging from 0.49 - 0.58).

**Q22: School Contributions to GCE**

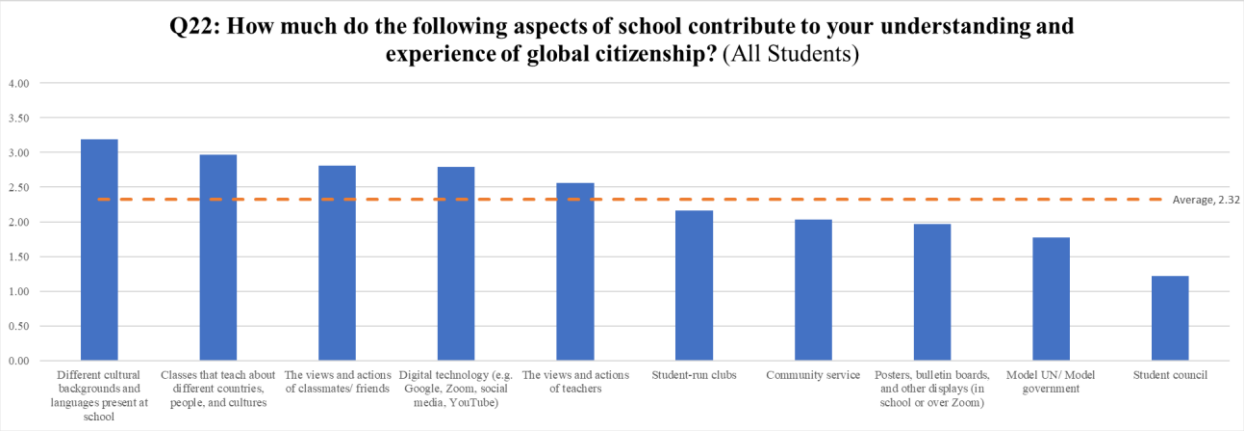
This question asked, "How much do the following aspects of school contribute to your understanding and experience of global citizenship?", providing 10 items, rated on a five-point scale, with an additional option to indicate "we don't have this". Responses of "we don't have this" were shown as blanks in the data and were excluded from the calculations, so they did not affect the averages. Students scored between two and four for seven items, indicating that they felt these items had *some* or *strong* influence, and they scored between one and two for three items, suggesting that these items had *little* to *no* influence. Of the three major questions on the survey, students exhibited the greatest range of responses for the items in this question; there was almost a two-point difference between the top item, which scored 3.19 ("different cultural backgrounds and languages present at school") and the lowest, which averaged 1.21 ("student council"). This suggests that perhaps the students perceived the bottom-ranked items to have very little relevance for GCE.

Graph 3 shows the 10 items in descending order based on the average scores of all students. The three top-ranking aspects of school that influenced the students' understanding and experience of global citizenship were, in descending order, "different cultural backgrounds and languages present at school," "classes that teach about different countries, people, and cultures," and "the views and actions of classmates/friends." Together, these three items suggest that the respondents felt what contributed most to their sense of being a global citizen were both the planned formal curricula of their schools as well as the rich and diverse backgrounds and perspectives of members of their school communities. The lowest ranking items were, in ascending order, "student council,"

"Model UN/Model government," and "posters, bulletin boards, and other displays (in school or over Zoom)."

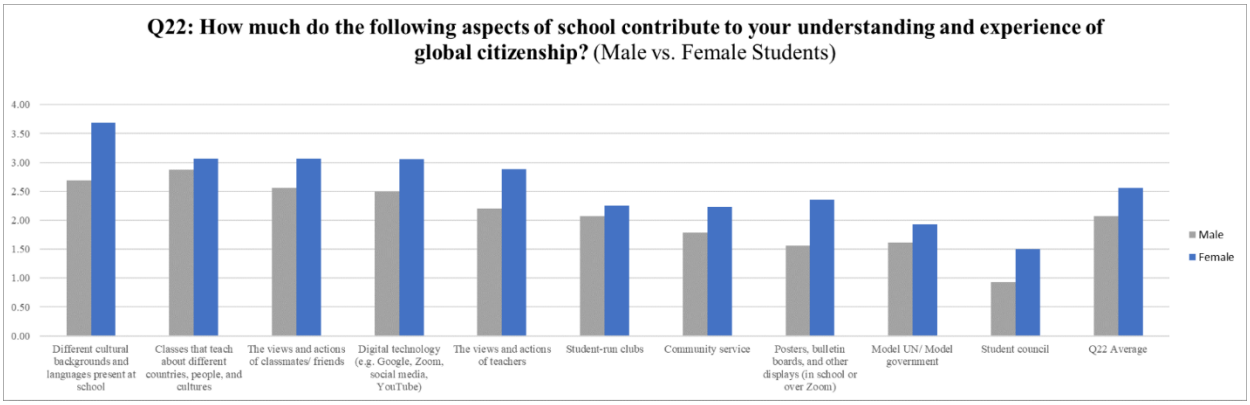
**Graph 3**

*Question 22 Overall Mean*




**Graph 4**

*Question 22 Male vs. Female Means*




Looking at the data by gender difference, there was again a notable pattern. Graph 4 shows that across all 10 items, girls scored higher than boys. Further, a t-test comparing the scores for male and female students, shown in Table 1, found a statistically significant difference in the means of the two groups at the $p = 0.10$ level. In other words, the 17 female students ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.84$), compared to the 16 male students ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 0.78$), demonstrated significantly higher scores, $t(31) = 1.71$, $p = 0.097$, indicating that the girls perceived the 10 listed types of learning at school

to contribute more to their understanding and experience of global citizenship. This question has a high level of internal reliability, suggesting that the 10 items worked well together to measure responses to Q22 overall, with Cronbach's alpha at $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ = 0.84 (Cohen et al., 2015; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Along with Q22, an optional open-ended question in this section of the survey asked, "Outside of school, are there also other ways you learn about being a global citizen? For example, through your family, non-profit organizations, or your neighborhood community?" Seven out of 33 students responded. Table 2 shows that there were four mentions of family, three mentions of the media, and two mentions each of living in different countries, friends, and neighbors/community. One student also mentioned global citizenship as a personal interest and that she did her own reading and research.

**Table 2**

*Ways Students Learned to Be Global Citizens Outside of School*

| Outside-of-School Exposure to GCE | Number of Mentions |
|---|---|
| Family | 4 |
| Media/social media/news | 3 |
| Living in different countries | 2 |
| Friends | 2 |
| Neighbors/community | 2 |
| Personal interest, including reading and research | 1 |

**Q29: The Influence of GCE**

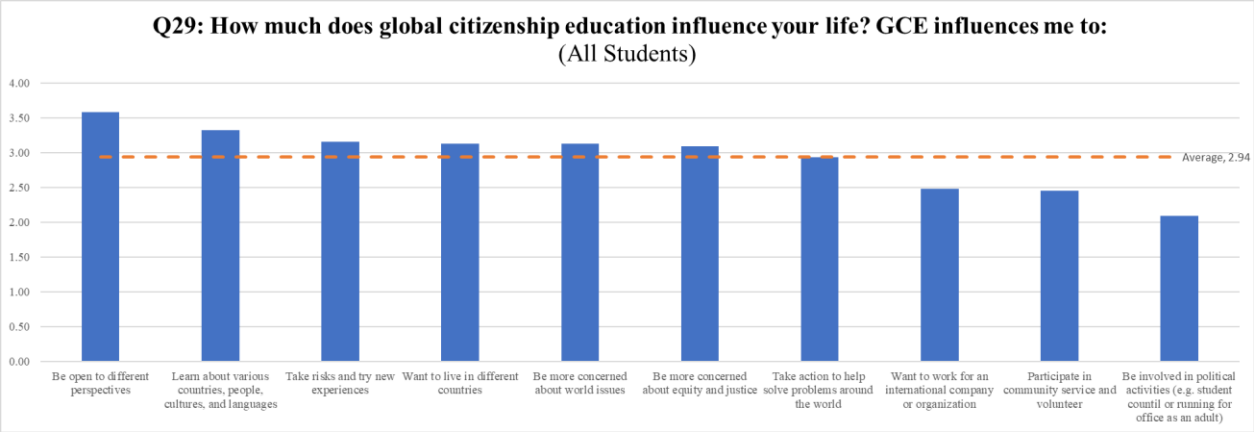
This question asked, "How much does global citizenship education influence your life?" and provided 10 items to be rated on a five-point scale. Graph 5 shows the 10 items based on the average score of all students in descending order. The more highly rated items indicated how GCE influenced the students the most. On a five-point scale, students scored above three for six items; these numbers were quite high, suggesting that students felt that GCE influenced them *some* or *strongly* in these ways.

The top-scoring items were "be open to different perspectives," "learn about various countries, people, cultures, and languages," and take risks and try new experiences" (descending order). The bottom-scoring items were "be involved in political activities," "participate in community service

and volunteer," and "want to work for an international company or organization" (ascending order).

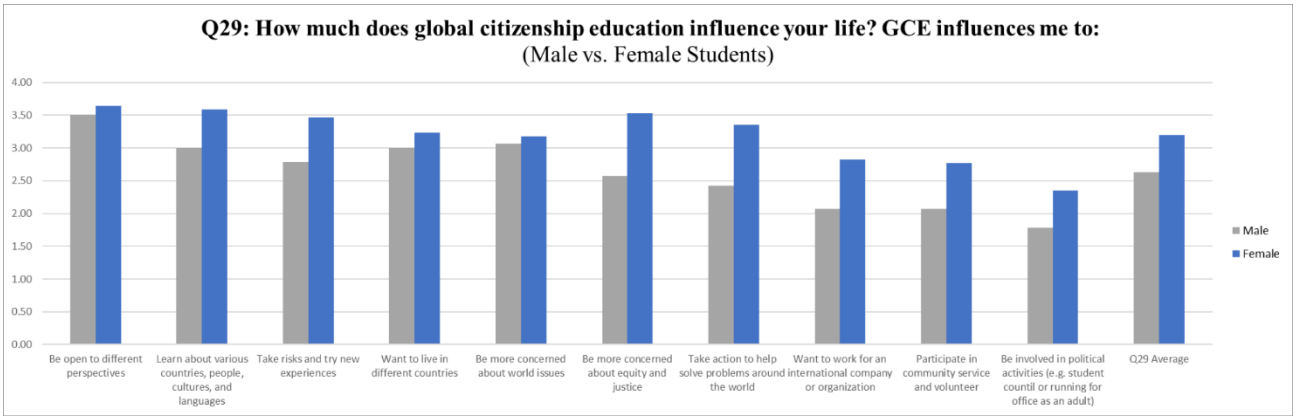
**Graph 5**

*Q29 Overall Mean*




**Graph 6**

*Question 29 Male vs. Female Means*




Responses to this question showed a gender difference consistent with the patterns indicated in Q18 and Q22. Graph 6 demonstrates that girls scored higher than boys across all items. In addition, a t-test, shown in Table 1, found a statistically significant difference in the means of the two groups at the $p = 0.05$ level. The 17 female participants ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.69$), compared to the 16 male participants ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.81$), scored significantly higher, suggesting that girls perceived themselves to be more highly influenced by GCE in terms of the 10 aspects listed than boys did,

t(29) = 2.10, p = 0.044. This question has a high level of internal reliability, suggesting that the 10 items worked well together to measure responses to Q29 overall, with Cronbach's alpha at $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ = 0.90 (Cohen et al., 2015; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

**No Differences by Socioeconomic Status**

In addition to calculating descriptive statistics and conducting t-tests for Questions 18, 22, and 29 to understand gender differences, I did the same to explore potential differences in student perspectives based on their SES. The t-tests for SES difference were statistically *insignificant* for all three questions, and the data did not offer insight into the role SES played in how transnational high school students in the U.S. understood, experienced, and may have been influenced by GCE. Please see Table 3 for the t-test results.

**Table 3**

*Independent t-tests for SES Difference*

| | High SES (n=13) | Low SES (n=20) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Mean (SD) | Mean (SD) | DF | t-statistic | p-value [a] | Cohen's *d* |
| Q18 Scale | 2.25 (0.42) | 2.11 (0.48) | 31 | 0.84 | 0.41 | 0.31 |
| Q22 Scale | 2.33 (1.06) | 2.32 (0.69) | 31 | 0.05 | 0.96 | 0.02 |
| Q29 Scale | 3.05 (0.90) | 2.86 (0.71) | 29 | 0.64 | 0.53 | 0.24 |

[a] Note: P-values are based on an independent two-samples t-test.

**Differences by Race/Ethnicity**

A one-way ANOVA found statistically significantly different scores for students identifying as White, Asian, and Other People of Color for Q29, at the p = 0.10 level, shown in Table 4. For Q18 and Q22, differences were statistically insignificant.

**Table 4**

*ANOVA Test for Differences by Race/Ethnicity*

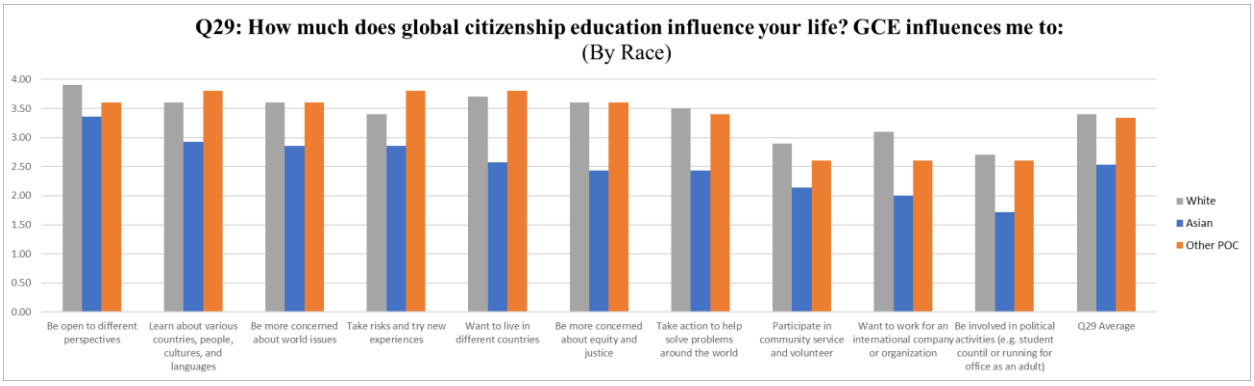
| Dependent Variable | Group Means (SD) | F-statistic | P-value | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q18 Scale | Asian: 2.21 (0.34)<br>White: 2.22 (0.63)<br>Other: 2.13 (0.38) | F(2, 28) = 0.07 | .930 | .01 |
| Q22 Scale | Asian: 2.02 (0.94)<br>White: 2.58 (0.79)<br>Other: 2.77 (0.34) | F(2, 28) = 2.28 | .121 | .14 |
| Q29 Scale | Asian: 2.53 (0.80)<br>White: 3.40 (0.64)<br>Other: 3.34 (0.38) | F(2, 26) = 5.42 | .010* | .29 |

* Statistically significant at the p = 0.10 level

Analyzing Q29 more deeply, Graph 7 shows the average scores for students who identified as White, Asian, and Other People of Color. The graph demonstrates, interestingly, that Asian students, on average, scored below the White and Other People of Color groups for all items. On the other hand, the average scores for students identifying as White and Other People of Color were quite similar, with the White group scoring higher on five items, the Other People of Color group higher on three items, and the two groups tied on two items.

**Graph 7**

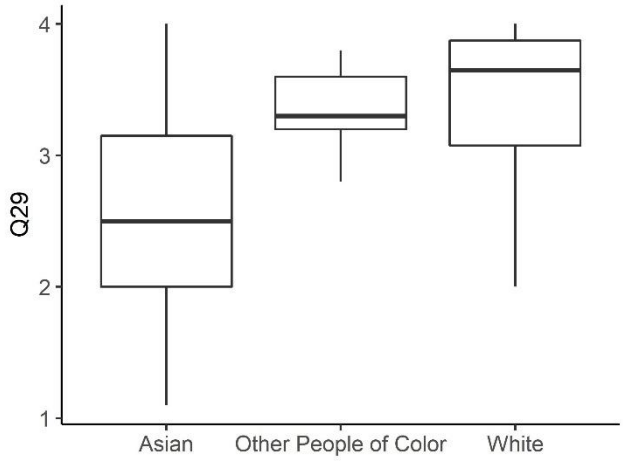
*Q29 Means by Race/Ethnicity*



In Graph 8, the box plot for Q29 shows noticeable and large differences among the three groups: the median scores were far apart, and the entire interquartile range of scores for Asian students was below the interquartile range for the Other People of Color group and almost the entire interquartile range for the White group. On the other hand, the distribution of scores for students identifying as White and those as Other People of Color were similar.

**Graph 8**

Box Plot for Q29, Difference by Race/Ethnicity




The ANOVA results for Q29 were aligned with the box plot pattern. The ANOVA yielded $p = 0.010$ and $R^2 = 0.29$, showing high statistical significance and a large effect size; this suggests that in terms of how transnational students perceived themselves to be influenced by the listed aspects of GCE offered at school, the three groups—White, Asian, and Other People of Color—differed in notable ways.

## Discussion and Implications

### Summary

From the survey, the most salient pattern was that girls consistently scored higher than boys on every item across the three major questions, which suggests that the female respondents reported themselves to learn more of various kinds of global citizenship skills, knowledge, and values at school, that more aspects of school activities contributed to their GCE, and that in turn, the GCE to which they have been exposed influenced them to change their thinking and behavior more

robustly. While t-tests did not show differences in student perspectives based on SES, an ANOVA found statistically significant differences in student perspectives based on race/ethnicity on Q29, which asked how youth were influenced by GCE to think or act. Although the small sample size is a clear limitation of the study, and the findings are not generalizable to all transnational students, the data suggest that identities likely do make a difference in how youth understand, experience, and are influenced by GCE. This finding is in alignment with past literature as well as my complementary qualitative study (Bradt, 2023).

**Responding to the First Three Research Questions: General Patterns**

For Q18, which asked how much various aspects of GCE students perceived themselves to learn at school, there was a qualitative difference between the top- and bottom-ranked items. The top two items consisted of skills and the third item was a form of conceptual understanding, in contrast to the remaining five items, for example, "environmental issues" and "relationships between countries," which were based on (factual) knowledge. This suggests that students felt more confident that at school, they had gained skills and conceptual understandings, rather than a concrete body of (factual) knowledge they might call up. This is aligned with the findings from studies reviewed: compared with 13 studies that reported that students felt GCE supported them to gain certain skills and personal qualities, for example, Myers (2010), only two reported that students felt that GCE contributed to their knowledge about cultural and national others (Niens & Reilly, 2012; Yamashita, 2006). In this analysis, I took up Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) definition of (factual) knowledge as "data," where to "'get' a fact requires only that we grasp the meaning of the words or see the data" (p. 132). On the other hand, (conceptual) understanding is "an insight into ideas, people, situations, and processes," where one can "make sense of what one knows, to be able to know why it's so, and to have the ability" to transfer this to "various situations and contexts" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 353). To clarify the difference, a piece of (factual) knowledge is "a triangle has three sides and three angles," in contrast to a (conceptual) understanding, which is "a triangle with three equal sides has three equal angles" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 132).

In Q22, which measured the extent to which various aspects of school contributed to students' understanding and experience of GCE, there was no clear qualitative pattern of how the items were ranked. With no previous research on this topic, I cannot provide an evidence-based explanation

of the lowest ranking items (in ascending order), "student council," "Model UN/Model government," and "posters, bulletin boards, and other displays (in school or over Zoom)." However, I hypothesize that student council and Model UN/Model government are extracurricular activities with very specific aims, which may not lend themselves to be easily considered as a part of GCE. Also, in our digital world, schools and students may be placing less emphasis and attention on physical displays like posters and bulletin boards.

In Q29, which asked the extent to which GCE influenced students' lives in various ways, there was also a qualitative difference between the nature of the first six versus the last four items. The six items with the highest scores, for example, "be open to different perspectives" and "be more concerned about world issues," had to do with students' developing themselves and their own perspectives/thinking. In contrast, the remaining four were about being influenced to change behavior, including "take action to help solve problems around the world" and "be involved in political activities." This pattern suggests that in their exposure to GCE, transnational youth found themselves more readily influenced in terms of their ideas, worldviews, and thinking processes, and that these students were less influenced to make changes to the ways that they behaved. In other words, the data suggests that perhaps the GCE to which the participants were exposed changed the students' thinking but could not support them in taking concrete steps to address issues of justice. This finding makes logical sense, and it is aligned with studies that have found that in their engagement with GCE, students did not go as far as to take critical action (Moffa, 2016; Myers, 2008; Niens & Reilly, 2012). Since the emphasis of some GCE models is to promote critical action, particularly for social justice (Andreotti, 2014), this challenging disconnect between its ability to influence thinking versus action is worth noting.

**Responding to the Final Research Question: Gender Differences**

Overall, female students' statistically significantly higher scores across all three major questions were aligned with past findings that female students were more engaged with GCE and civics. However, in contrast to existing research, my data did not suggest girls to be more community-oriented and boys politically oriented (Baker, 2009; da Silva et al., 2004; Gaby, 2017; Munck et al., 2018; Schulz et al., 2010, 2018). For Q18, the items where the girls' scores were most different from the boys' had to do with having certain knowledge, including knowledge of current events and environmental and human rights issues. In addition, regarding the item, "empathy, care, and

kindness," past literature would predict this to be an area where girls and boys would exhibit some of the most visible differences (girls to be more engaged and interested), but this was not the case in my study.

It is more challenging to understand the results of Q22 in the context of existing literature, as past research has not specifically examined the extent to which youth see various aspects of school as contributing to their GCE. The literature does suggest that girls are more engaged with GCE and civics generally, which is aligned with my finding that the girls scored higher on every item. Similar to Q18, in Q22, I did not find girls to be more community oriented.

In Q29, three out of four items where the scores differed the most by gender were about social justice and the common good, namely "be more concerned about equity and justice" (0.96 difference), "take action to solve problems around the world" (0.92 difference), and "participate in community service and volunteer" (0.69 difference). On the other hand, these items were ranked as some of the lowest based on the means of all the respondents. These results together raise a curious question of why boys saw themselves to be so little influenced by GCE to think about and take action around social justice. Further, in this question, I also did not find girls to be more community oriented. For instance, on the item, "participate in community service and volunteer," girls and boys scored very similarly (0.15-point difference). On the item, "be involved in political activities (e.g., student council or running for an office as an adult)," there was a very large difference (0.92 points) between boys and girls, with the girls scoring higher. To contextualize the difference between my data and past literature, it is worth remembering that the survey was completed by high school students with transnational backgrounds, attending institutions that foregrounded GCE, who volunteered to participate; as such, these students were likely to be especially interested in GCE. Also, the small sample size is not representative of the general population.

**Responding to the Final Research Question: SES**

In addition to the small sample size, I believe the statistically insignificant result for SES can be explained by the fact that as a whole, the 33 respondents had relatively high SES. To conduct the t-test for differences by SES, the participants were split based on the median score of the group, which resulted in 20 "higher SES" and 13 "lower SES" students. Although the composite SES score ranged from 6-20, only two students had scores below 10; the average was quite high at

16.03 points, and the median score was 17. In contrast, the participants of the author's qualitative study who demonstrated divergent perspectives on GCE differed much more in their SES (in intersection with race); the two lower SES students had scores of four and six, and the two higher SES students the scores of 16 and 18 (Bradt, 2023). As such, the lack of statistically significant differences in perspectives of GCE based on SES does not necessarily contradict past literature or my previous findings that privilege matters (Bradt, 2023). Further, as I recruited both public and private school students, it is telling that many more of the latter completed the survey. Again, this may hint at a connection with the finding in my previous study, that transnational high school youth with more privileged backgrounds have more time, space, and support to engage with GCE (Bradt, 2023).

**Responding to the Final Research Question: Race/Ethnicity**

The statistically significantly different score of transnational Asian students, compared with those identifying as White or other People of Color, raises questions about how transnational Asian youth might be substantively differently influenced by their exposure to GCE. The literature provides some possible explanations. For example, Li (2009) proposed that the difficulty experienced by Chinese students who immigrated to Canada in their school adjustment can be partially explained by the vast "cultural distance" between Chinese and (mainstream, White) Canadian culture. Similarly, Cheng and Yang (2019) worked with Chinese high school students in the U.S. and found that in their "international sojourning" (p. 553), while these youth were exposed to "local people and local culture" (p. 560) and developed language, interpersonal, and intercultural communication skills, they continued to experience marginalization based on language and culture. These findings echo one key aspect of the Model Minority Stereotype (MMS)—the idea of Asian students as being forever foreigners in the U.S. and different from other students of Color (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). If transnational Asian students in the sample were influenced by the MMS and/or the vast cultural distance between their homes and the values and assumptions of GCE as offered in the U.S., these youth may have found this kind of curriculum to be less influential.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study sheds light on how transnational high school students understood and experienced GCE and the role identities, particularly gender, played in this process, informing researchers and practitioners in our efforts to make this kind of curriculum more relevant for this group of youth and students in general. To summarize the findings, Q18 showed that transnational high school students felt that they learned more skills and understandings, rather than concrete bodies of knowledge, in the GCE they accessed at school. Further research is required to understand whether the participants' transnational backgrounds were related to this perspective—perhaps by living across and between countries/cultures, it was easier to acquire skills and broad understandings (that could be flexibly applied in school and life) rather than large bodies of factual knowledge. In addition, as many participants attended international and private schools with diverse student populations, perhaps the GCE provided at these institutions also emphasized skills over knowledge. Overall, results from Q18 encourage us to ask whether certain kinds of knowledge might be necessary (or helpful) for one to function as a global citizen, and if so, how to balance the teaching of skills and knowledge.

Further, Q29 suggests that the students perceived themselves to be more highly influenced by GCE to develop themselves and their thinking, rather than to act differently. Since the respondents attended various schools and were exposed to different GCE programs, these results raise the question of whether there might exist a general challenge to teach knowledge (versus skills) and to influence changes in students' actions and behavior (versus thinking), if these were the goals. Although this paper cannot draw conclusions, perhaps the participants' transnational backgrounds—living across cultures/nations—made it more challenging for them to take action to affect change in a specific place; therefore, the students chose to focus on their personal development.

On the other hand, based on Andreotti's (2014) pioneering work, there is a prevalent critique that GCE is not critical enough. For instance, exploring the effects of extracurricular activities in cultivating global citizenship in a Moroccan private middle school, Idrissi (2020) found that students demonstrated "cognitive development" and "attitudes of empathy, respect, solidarity," but programs "failed to instill a sense of responsibility to act for the betterment of the world" (p. 272), calling for teaching "beyond the soft approaches" (p. 285). Further, Duarte and Robinson-

Jones (2022) critiqued Dutch administrators, teachers, and students in bilingual secondary education for taking a liberal instead of a critical perspective on GCE. However, such scholarship does not necessarily propose concrete steps to move toward a critical approach. We need to do more than say that GCE is not working, and this study is a good start to establishing a better understanding of what students want and need in their GCE.

Next, the two scales, Q18 and Q29, can serve as useful tools to assess the outcomes of GCE programs and make adjustments, depending on their specific goals. The open-ended question attached to Q22 also gives us a sense of what aspects of students' lives, beyond formal schooling, might be an important part of their GCE, highlighting families' Funds of Knowledge in providing GCE to their children (Moll et al., 2013) and emphasizing the importance of considering home- and community-based resources. Attending to the roles families and communities play in GCE gives us a foundation to consider additional avenues of research.

Equally as important as general trends, gender differences in the data have led me to question whether the female respondents reflected themselves to be so much more engaged with GCE because the *concept* of global citizenship education and the *framing* of this kind of learning are gendered. Perhaps the term, GCE, connotes associations with a worldwide community, culture and identity, and solidarity among humans, which female students have been socialized to be interested in. On the other hand, the fact is that a global government does not exist, and GCE cannot refer to the legal idea of being a citizen of the world and sharing the same rights and responsibilities with all. As such, if as civics literature suggests, boys are more interested in "hard" politics (Da Silva et al., 2004; Malin et al., 2015; Gaby, 2017; Wray-Lake et al., 2020), being a global citizen does not allow them the opportunity to vote or to run for political office on a worldwide platform. Instead, if GCE were framed using another term that is more aligned with technical skills or knowledge, perhaps male students might feel more inclined to engage. These findings begin to inform our thinking about how to leverage intersecting identities to better offer GCE for all youth.

In terms of race/ethnicity, Asian students' statistically significantly different scores from the other students raise questions about how and why their experiences of GCE diverge from those of other youth. For the future, it is worth exploring whether and the extent to which cultural distance, the Model Minority Stereotype, or other factors may influence how Asian students take up GCE, and how GCE might be tailored to better suit the needs of Asian youth who may have been set apart

by structural forces in the U.S. More research is needed on how youth of various (intersecting) identities understand and experience GCE, which will contribute to informing how we can continue to improve the ways we offer these curricula.

Finally, this study leads to two implications for learning and teaching. Given the wide range of aspects of school that the survey respondents perceived to contribute to their GCE, programs can better specify and clarify to students, teachers, and families what its GCE is intended to teach, including tools/skills, dispositions, and knowledge. Based on this, students should be given concrete opportunities to engage in this learning and practice any outcomes targeted. On the other hand, while we offer clear and substantive learning opportunities, it is unproductive to mandate specific changes in students' thinking and behavior, both short- and long-term. For example, demanding that students take critical action in response to social justice issues, and relatedly, suggesting that the lack of action is a *failure* to engage with global citizenship, can reinforce universalized norms of education.

Relatedly, from a social justice perspective, schools and programs should ensure that students of various intersecting identities have access to various options for learning. Anyon's (1980) study, which showed how five types of elementary schools taught students differently given their SES and perceived life opportunities, provides an example of what to avoid. The strong gender difference found in this study suggests that identities indeed play a role in determining how students learn about global citizenship. On this basis, more work needs to be done to ensure that GCE responds to the needs of all kinds of youth.

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## Appendix: Survey Instrument

Spring 2021 GCE Survey

**Section I: About You**

What is your grade level?
- o 9th
- o 10th
- o 11th
- o 12th

What kind of high school do you go to?
- o A public school
- o A charter or magnet public school
- o An international public school
- o A private day school
- o A private boarding school
- o An international private school
- o Another kind of school

What is your racial/ethnic identity? ***Select all those that apply.***

**Why do I ask this?** I ask you to share how you identify your race, because I am interested in how students with various racial identities might understand and experience global citizenship education differently. The racial categories in this question are taken from the United States 2020 Census. I understand that these categories may not fit your racial identity perfectly. Please select more than one category as needed or choose "another racial identity" and write your own racial identity.

- ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Another racial identity (option to specify below)
- ☐ Prefer not to say

[Optional] Another racial identity: _____

What is your gender identity?

**Why do I ask this?** I ask you to share how you identify your gender, because I am interested in how students with various gender identities might understand and experience global citizenship education differently. I understand that gender identity is complex. If none of these options fits, please choose "another gender identity" and write your own gender identity.

- o Female
- o Male
- o Non-binary
- o Another gender identity (option to specify below)
- o Prefer not to say

[Optional] Another gender identity: _____

Have you lived in a country other than the United States?
- o Yes
- o No

What language(s) do you speak at home? _____

How often do you speak with friends or family who live in other countries (by phone/text, video call, email, social media, or other ways)?
- o Every day
- o Every week
- o Every month
- o Once a year
- o Every few years
- o Never
- o I do not have friends or family members who live in other countries

What is the highest level of education completed by your parent (or primary adult who takes care of you)?
- o Completed 9th grade or less
- o Completed 12th grade (high school diploma or GED)
- o Completed some college or has a vocational diploma (e.g. dental hygiene, bookkeeping, or mechanic)
- o Has a college degree
- o Completed a Master's, Doctoral, or other advanced degree
- o I'm not sure

What is the highest level of education completed by your second parent (or second adult who takes care of you)?
- o Completed 9th grade or less
- o Completed 12th grade (high school diploma or GED)
- o Completed some college or has a vocational diploma (e.g. dental hygiene, bookkeeping, or mechanic)
- o Has a college degree
- o Completed a Master's, Doctoral, or other advanced degree
- o I'm not sure
- o Not applicable OR no second parent or guardian

Which of the following are in your home?

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| A quiet place to study (17) | o | o |
| A room of your own (18) | o | o |
| A guest room (13) | o | o |
| Two or more bathrooms (19) | o | o |
| A fast internet connection (4) | o | o |
| Computers or tablets (examples: iPad or Kindle Fire) (15) | o | o |
| Works of literature (8) | o | o |
| Works of art (9) | o | o |
| Musical instruments (12) | o | o |
| Two or more cars (20) | o | o |

**Section II: Making Meaning of Global Citizenship Education**

Q18 Each of the following is something you might learn as a part of global citizenship education. *How much of the following do you personally learn from school?*

| | A lot | Some | A little | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current events | o | o | o | o |
| Knowledge of different countries, cultures, and people | o | o | o | o |
| Environmental issues | o | o | o | o |
| Human rights issues | o | o | o | o |
| Relationships between countries | o | o | o | o |
| Diversity, inclusion, and justice | o | o | o | o |
| Critical thinking, research, communication, and organizational skills | o | o | o | o |
| Empathy, care, and kindness | o | o | o | o |

[Optional] As you think about what global citizenship means to you, are there other things that you learn at school? _____

[Optional] Is there anything that your school teaches about global citizenship that you disagree with or have questions about? _____

**Section III: Global Citizenship Education at School and Beyond**

Q22 How much do the following aspects of school contribute to your understanding and experience of global citizenship?

| | 5 (strong influence) | 4 | 3 (some influence) | 2 | 1 (no influence) | We don't have this |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classes that teach about different countries, people, and cultures | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Student-run clubs | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Model UN/Model government | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Student council | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Community service | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| The views and actions of teachers | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| The views and actions of classmates/friends | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Different cultural backgrounds and languages present at school | o | o | o | o | o | o |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Digital technology (e.g. Google, Zoom, social media, YouTube) | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Posters, bulletin boards, and other displays (in school or over Zoom) | o | o | o | o | o | o |

[Optional] Are there other aspects of school that contribute to how you understand and experience global citizenship education? _____

Overall, how do you feel about the global citizenship education provided at your school? ***Select all the statements that are true.***

- ☐ My school teaches a good amount of global citizenship.
- ☐ I think learning about global citizenship at school is fun or enjoyable.
- ☐ My school does not teach enough about global citizenship.
- ☐ I would like to learn more about global citizenship at school.
- ☐ I am not that interested in learning about global citizenship at school.
- ☐ I don't know much about what my school teaches about global citizenship.
- ☐ None of the above

[Optional] *Outside of school*, are there also other ways you learn about being a global citizen? For example, through your family, non-profit organizations, or your neighborhood community?

_____

**Section IV: The Influence of Global Citizenship Education**

Q29 How much does global citizenship education influence your life? GCE influences me to:

| | 5 (strong influence) | 4 | 3 (some influence) | 2 | 1 (no influence) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learn about various countries, people, cultures, and languages | o | o | o | o | o |
| Want to live in different countries | o | o | o | o | o |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participate in community service and volunteer | o | o | o | o | o |
| Be more concerned about world issues | o | o | o | o | o |
| Be involved in political activities (e.g. student council or running for office as an adult) | o | o | o | o | o |
| Want to work for an international company or organization | o | o | o | o | o |
| Be more concerned about equity and justice | o | o | o | o | o |
| Take risks and try new experiences (e.g. eat new foods, travel) | o | o | o | o | o |
| Be open to different perspectives | o | o | o | o | o |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Take action to help solve problems around the world | o | o | o | o | o |

[Optional] Are there other ways global citizenship education influences your life? _____

**Section V: Thank you!**

[Optional] To thank you for your participation in this survey, the researcher would like to make a $5 donation to one of the following organizations on your behalf. Please select the organization you would like to donate to.

- o **Equal Justice Initiative**: "To end mass incarceration & excessive punishment in the U.S.; to challenge racial & economic injustice; and to protect basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society."
- o **World Resource Institute**: "To move human society to live in ways that protect Earth's environment and its capacity to provide for the needs & aspirations of current & future generations."
- o **Donors Choose**: "Engages the public in public schools by giving people a simple, accountable and personal way to address educational inequity; envisions a nation where children in every community have the tools and experiences needed for an excellent education."

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Thank you so much for your response! Please contact Nancy Bradt at (phone number) or (email) if you have any questions or feedback.

Please visit (website) if you would like to know more about the project.