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**I Pledge Allegiance To... Flexible Citizenship and Shifting Scales of
Belonging**

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**I Pledge Allegiance To....
Flexible Citizenship and Shifting Scales of Belonging**

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Abstract: Cosmopolitans and their critics often imagine a spectrum of affinities—concentric circles of belonging reaching from the self and family to the nation and, finally, to all humanity. Debates over the role schools should play in educating ‘world citizens’ versus national patriots follow suit: Should educators work to maintain the reputedly natural, warm, and necessary scale of national allegiance or should they attempt to produce new subjects oriented to Earth and the human family? In this paper, we critique the spatial assumptions that underlie this discourse. We question the assumption that affinity is attached to particular scales, that these scales are fixed rather than flexible, and that they are received rather than produced. Our examination focuses on Martha Nussbaum’s celebrated proposal that civic education be freed from its national tether and allowed to embrace the whole world. We provide evidence from our case study of youth in the in the year following the events of September 11 in order to trouble the nation/world binary that is central to both her proposal and its critics. An awareness of the social construction of scale and the contingency of patriotism, we argue, can help educators appreciate that some young people *already*, in advance of the proposed reforms, are imagining and producing allegiances that are multiple, flexible, and impermanent.

Introduction

It has been several years now since the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. of September 11, 2001, yet its impact lingers on in the world of education. The events of that day engendered a widespread reawakening of interest in patriotism and allegiance in the United States, and debates on teaching patriotism in the public schools continues to appear in both scholarly and popular forums (Abowitz 2002; Apple 2002; Finn 2003; Hymowitz 2002; Mehlinger 2002; Nussbaum 2002). In nearly all of these works allegiance is assumed to occur more naturally and persistently at the scale of the nation than at other scales, and the question of how one should nourish, reproduce, or redirect this affinity in schools (or not) has become an overriding concern for both educators and philosophers.

A good example of this assumption at work appears in the volume *For Love of Country?*, which includes Martha Nussbaum's (2002) celebrated essay on patriotism and cosmopolitanism and sixteen scholarly responses to it. Nussbaum proposes a cosmopolitan civic education for students in American schools. She has in mind a curriculum at odds with the national purposes that she believes schools presently serve. She wants schools in the United States to teach children not that they are, above all, citizens of the United States, but that "they are, above all, citizens of a world of human beings..." (p. 6). She underpins her belief in the positive effects of a cosmopolitan education on the philosophical premises of liberal universalism. For her, the ongoing process of liberal inclusion, the deliberative practices of universal reason, and the widening of categories of affinity are all intricately linked together.

Nussbaum draws on Hierocles of the Stoic philosophers to illustrate her understanding of modern affinity; she uses the metaphor of concentric circles to represent different kinds of attachment where "the first one encircles the self, the next takes in the immediate family" and so on until the final circle, which is "the largest one, humanity as a whole" (p. 9). In this image affinity to others is perceived as associated with distance from a center point (the self). The last circle (global humanity, or the cosmos) is the most difficult or 'unnatural' position for an individual self to reach, but for Nussbaum it is an absolutely essential destination for the creation of an ethical being. For her it is far too frequent that the last circle of affinity that many people achieve ends at the national scale, a scale of allegiance Nussbaum finds problematic.

In her essay and in the responses to it, there is a clear assumption that in the modern era one of the most natural and long-lasting forms of human allegiance is to the nation. Thus although she

introduces multiple forms of historical and contemporary affinity (religious, ethnic, clan, etc.) to her discussion, the particular dichotomy that she foregrounds is between patriotism (loyalty to the national scale) and cosmopolitanism (loyalty to the global scale). She draws on the novel *The Home and the World* by Rabindranath Tagore and several Greek philosophers to illustrate her argument for the latter position.

The philosophical and political questions raised in Nussbaum's essay were understood by most scholars and pundits as a question of the merits of educating students for cosmopolitanism *rather than* patriotism (Barber 2002; Hymowitz 2002; McConnell 2002; Putnam 2002). This incited a pitched philosophical battle over the question of the attainability and/or desirability of 'world citizenship.' It also raised the question as to whether or not *educators* in particular should maintain and entrench the reputedly natural, warm, and satisfying scale of national allegiance or attempt to produce new subjects oriented to what many deemed a cool, cerebral, and more abstract scale of the globe.

In this paper, we critique the spatial assumptions made in Nussbaum's essay and in the numerous responses it engendered. Nussbaum, along with most of her critics, assumes a naturalness of affinities at particular scales. Further, these scales are presumed not only to be 'received' rather than produced, but also are represented as inflexible and continuous through time. The global cosmopolitan and the national patriot are projected as alternatives, and the schools have become enmeshed within this debate because they are seen to point children to one or another of these alternatives. While (according to Nussbaum) it may be possible to adopt and adhere to both the national and the cosmopolitan positions,¹ they are presented nevertheless, as separate, pre-formed scales rather than relational concepts produced in conjunction with each other. In other words, these spatial scales are represented in the literature as natural and autonomous scales of analysis, existing independently of the actions and beliefs of human beings.

While sympathetic to Nussbaum's proposal in many ways, we argue that the static and normalized spatial conceptualizations of the nation and the cosmos limit the efficacy of her argument and constrain the social imaginary in which educators conceive of and plan the school curriculum. Her spatial categories themselves are problematic as they are assumed to exist independently of their economic and cultural production through time. We believe both Nussbaum and her critics reify these

¹ Indeed, she makes it clear in her "Reply" (pp. 131-144) at the end of the book that her original call for educating students for world citizenship should not *preclude* other forms of affinity such as local, ethnic, or national. She argues for a *both/and* position. Our critique is not the same as several of her respondents (Putnam, McConnell, Barber), who believe she sets up an *either/or* dichotomy, where a student must choose between allegiances.

categories by abstracting them from the everyday local and global practices through which space is produced and allegiance secured. Conceptualizations of the legal, cultural, economic, and social purview of spatial scales such as the ‘local,’ the ‘city,’ the ‘nation-state,’ or the ‘suprastate’ are constantly in flux and reflect both the structural forces shaping the contemporary global economic system as well as the ongoing struggles of different social actors to influence these understandings (Harvey 2003; Roy 2003; Willinsky 2000; Mitchell 2004).

Much of the geographic literature on scale helps us come to terms with the changing scale of state-making today, a form of rescaling marked since the 1970s by the rise of transnational regimes of government, and by the parallel displacement of national-state power to sub-national regions and cities that contend with one another in increasingly global competitions for investment (e.g., Brenner, 1997; Smith, 1992). Examples of the former include the formation of transnational free trade regions and agreements such as the European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the World Trade Organization; the latter processes can be observed in the increasingly fierce struggles between port cities such as Seattle and Portland or between more heavily unionized areas in the North versus “right to work” regions in the South. In addition to the primarily economic ramifications of scalar shifts in the contemporary period there is also significant interest in examining the *intersection* of economic and cultural or discursive ties in the formation of scale (e.g. Marston, 2000). For example, what are the advantages of a particular discourse about the nation and the globe or about patriotism and cosmopolitanism to dominant groups in a given society?

Globalization is clearly producing new kinds of economic interconnections and ties but it has also spawned new types of discourses (e.g. about globalization’s inevitability or desirability as well as about ‘natural’ boundaries and ‘natural’ forms of cultural belonging; see Beck 2000; Cox 1997; Massey 2005; Sparke forthcoming). Thus the scales that are produced within the context of globalization processes are never neutral; rather they reflect specific configurations of power that must be identified contextually. Indeed, as Cheah (1998) writes, both nationalism *and* cosmopolitanism should be interrogated in terms of their relationship to global capitalism rather than as abstract processes to be ‘demystified’ through philosophical debate. “Instead of indulging in the complacent demystification of nationalism as a ‘derivative discourse’ or moralistically condemning cosmopolitanism as uncommitted bourgeois detachment, we ought to turn our critical focus to the mutating global field of political, economic, and cultural forces in which nationalism and cosmopolitanism are invoked as practical discourses” (p. 31).

Following Foucault (1980) and numerous other post-structuralist scholars (e.g., Butler, 1990; Cherryholmes, 1988), we understand subjects as *productive of and produced through* discursive

formations and practices rather than as a priori autonomous agents who are ‘confronted with’ pre-existing scales and categories of meaning. Thus instead of fixing and normalizing specific scales of analysis and then identifying certain kinds of allegiances as tethered to those scales, we should interrogate why these particular scales and affinities have become the subject of so much interest, how they may be bound up with global economic and political formations, and how they are produced through discursive and material processes operating in a mutually constitutive manner (Anagnost 1997; Anderson 1991; Bhabha 1990; Nairn 1981; Parker 1996). After this, it is possible to deconstruct the notion of natural scales and of natural identities associated with them.

The processes of mixing and movement associated with globalization have been ongoing for the past several decades, contributing to a pluralization of orientations and a multiplication of subject positions (e.g. Cheah and Robbins 1998; Mitchell 2001; Ong 1999; Parker 1996; Robbins 1999; Sparke, in press; Vertovec and Cohen 2002). In the contemporary era we believe this has led to an increased spatial and temporal flexibility of multiple allegiances rather than an essentially static and unidirectional movement of affinity from inner concentric circle to outer or from warm to cool. Further, we believe that contemporary subjects are constituted and transformed *through* these flexible, often contradictory positions and relations and must negotiate conflicting calls to allegiance on a frequent basis. The static and abstracted conceptualization of identity and affinity in terms of time and space limits Nussbaum’s arguments (as well as those of her critics) as they seem removed from the actually existing world of contemporary global, plural, and often transnational life (Burbules and Torres 2000; Connolly 1995; Parker 2004; Pollack, Bhabha, Breckenridge, and Chakrabarty 2000; Rouse 1995; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard 2004).

This lacuna is also evident in Nussbaum’s Kantian-based universalist claims, which similarly rely on a static and culturally uniform understanding of ‘the universal.’ Despite her professed ‘cosmopolitan’ openness to difference, Nussbaum’s conceptualization of the universal is ultimately founded on western Enlightenment values that are assumed to be held by all ‘rational’ human beings. These implicit cultural values can close off the potential for radical critique and delimit the understanding of ‘acceptable’ difference. In arguing for a more processual, open, and contingent understanding of the universal, Butler (2002) makes manifest the perils involved in assuming unanimity and agreement of this kind through time and across space:

This is not to say that there ought to be no reference to the universal or that it has become, for us, an impossibility. On the contrary. All it means is that there are cultural conditions for its articulation that are not always the same, and that the term gains its meaning for us precisely through these decidedly less than universal conditions. This is a paradox that any injunction to adopt a universal attitude will encounter. For it may be that in one culture a set of rights are considered to be

universally endowed, and that in another those very rights mark the limit to universalizability, i.e., ‘If we grant those people those rights we will be undercutting the foundations of the universal as we know it.’ (pp. 45-46)

Butler goes on to give the example of lesbian and gay people, whose essential right to be included in the category of “the human” has been questioned by “various cultures and various mainstream human rights groups” through time.

Finally, despite the recent calls for patriotic and/or cosmopolitan education in the school system, the assumptions about the production and maintenance of scales of affinity are made by and for adults. There is little sense in this genre of how space is produced and allegiance secured *by and for children*, nor is there a sense of the potentially transforming and transformative relations of affinity through time. In our research and in the recent literature on the new “global” children of the contemporary era (e.g., Buckingham, 2000; Holloway and Valentine, 2003; Katz, 2005; Maira, 2004), it appears that children are *especially* open to movement across and between the direct, immediate, and embodied to the abstract and distant; children *already* imagine and produce the spaces of the world at multiple, flexible, and often interchangeable scales.²

In this paper we examine the binary at the heart of both Nussbaum’s proposal and her critics’ responses. We do this in some detail for three reasons: to clarify what is at stake in this debate, to expose the underlying arguments about the scales of community life and belonging, and also to point to the *generative* consequences of this way of thinking about space and citizenship; that is, as the debate proceeds about the virtues of a civic education tied to the national scale as opposed to one tied to a world scale, the binary itself is both rehearsed and propagated. But more than this, in addition to examining the terms of the Nussbaum debate, we employ data from a case study. Here we provide evidence of the essentially flexible and contingent nature of belonging and identification for at least some teenagers. Their responses were gathered in and around a set of critical incidents—in the year following the events of September 11th as the war in Afghanistan was unfolding and the invasion of Iraq was looming. We organize these data into two categories that illustrate, first, the generally transient nature of these youths’ patriotic sentiment and, second, the spatially flexible manner in which they engaged with questions of affinity and belonging. In this way, by exposing the binary in

² Decades ago, Paul Hanna (1963; cf Hertzberg, 1981) proposed a coordinated social studies curriculum for the elementary grades that would be organized around sequentially expanding environments—concentric circles, so to speak—from the family and neighborhood and then outward to the community, the state, the nation, and world. But his was a scheme for coherent curriculum development, not a theory of children’s development. He may very well have known, even then, that children already imagine the social world at multiple and flexible scales.

the contemporary literature on allegiance and then challenging it with evidence, we hope to display the reification of categories in contemporary discourses on citizen formation while at the same time expanding the universe of possibilities for thinking about the education of allegiance.

Nussbaum's Cosmopolitan Proposal and its Critics

Nussbaum advocates a cosmopolitan civic education for American children. Why, Nussbaum asks, do we think of people from, say, China, as our brothers and sisters the minute they dwell in a certain place, namely *our* place, but not when they dwell in a certain *other* place, namely China? “What is it about the national boundary that magically converts people toward whom we are both incurious and indifferent into people to whom we have duties of mutual respect?” (p. 14).

Nussbaum's argument rests on Kant's universalism, particularly his moral injunction that every human being should behave in ways that treat equally “the dignity of reason and moral choice in every human being” (p. 8). It is an accident of nature that one is born here or there—in China, Sudan, or the United States. One was “thrown” into such groups, as the existentialists say, and it would be a strange act of hubris to take credit or blame for where one landed. Where one is born is a chance happening, in Nussbaum's term an “accident,” and no more. National boundaries are, and here is her point, *morally* arbitrary. The cosmopolitan ideal takes equality even more seriously than has nation-bound multiculturalism; it deterritorializes respect, granting it to everyone everywhere.

Let us examine the underpinnings of Nussbaum's proposal. She argues her case on four fronts, the first of which concerns self knowledge. “Through cosmopolitan education, we learn more about ourselves” (p. 11). This is the familiar argument that difference serves as a reflective mirror in which, perhaps for the first time, our taken-for-granted customs and beliefs, our habits and passions, are rendered visible. By peering at our ways through the ways of others, “we come to see what in our practices is local and nonessential, and what is more broadly or deeply shared” (p. 11). In this line of reasoning, Americans' notorious ignorance of the rest of the world implies an equally weighty ignorance of themselves. In contrast to the time-honored assumption that Americans know something about themselves but nothing about the world—they know their own wars and presidents, for example—this view argues that Americans know little of others and, *therefore*, also little of themselves.

Second, a cosmopolitan curriculum would enable Americans to help solve problems that require international cooperation. The coming water shortage, for example, obeys no national boundaries, nor does air pollution or religious zeal. As developing nations strive to achieve a standard

of living equal to that in the United States, Earth's ability to sustain such massive consumption will quickly be exhausted. The U.S. has one-twentieth of the world's population but consumes one-fifth of its resources. If only one more nation—China—were to develop a similar consumption habit, the two would consume 100 percent of the planet's resources. Nussbaum argues that any intelligent deliberation about the environment, food and water supplies, and population requires global planning and the recognition of a shared planetary fate. Cosmopolitan education would not only aim to redirect American youth's loyalties from the nation to the globe, but would also increase their ability to solve its problems.

Third, a cosmopolitan curriculum would have American youth examine their relative privilege among the peoples of Earth and make problematic their moral obligation to the rest of humanity. Such a curriculum would emphasize the choice that wealthy Americans face between our worldwide brothers and sisters—humankind—and a self-serving hypocrisy that allows us to circle the wagons around an arbitrary slice of brothers and sisters who happen to live within the same national borders.

Fourth, Nussbaum is concerned that in the United States we habitually and consistently draw the line separating “us” and “others” *nationally* and, further, that this is often done in contrast to and defensively against drawing it *ethnically*. She chides liberal scholars, such as Richard Rorty and Sheldon Hackney, who advocate deliberative democracy as the bridge of choice across our cultural and racial differences, but for whom “our” is national and territorial—limited to people living in the United States. For Nussbaum this “natural” form of patriotism merges with jingoism, albeit nicely disguised as multicultural respect. Here she points to a conservative bent in liberal multiculturalism: its inward-looking nationalism, its blind spot to humans living outside “our” national borders. She argues that the people who were “created equal” and who have “unalienable rights” were not only Americans; it was *universal* human rights to which the American Founders appealed. “In making choices in both political and economic matters,” Nussbaum writes, “we should most seriously consider the right of other human beings to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (p. 13).

World- and self-knowledge, transnational problem-solving, sharing Earth's resources, and moral consistency versus passionate distinctions between us and them—these are the cornerstones of Nussbaum's call for a civic education that does not rest on the accident of birth in this or that national society. According to her, cosmopolitan education should *replace* nationalistic/patriotic education, and it should do so especially in the United States, because of its people's privileged standard of living. But Nussbaum makes no promises. She guarantees no worldwide cooperation, not even peace

or a unified humanity. What she recommends is a disposition, an allegiance, toward the good and the right that leaves no one out.

Her proposal appears as the lead chapter in the book *For Love of Country?* and is followed by sixteen responses by an array of well-known scholars. The great majority of these reify her rigid separation of scales, making the same assumptions about ‘natural’ scales of affinity and the sharp and continuous distinctions between national and global allegiances. The only ‘alternative’ emotional empathy is considered to reside in family or in ethnic/religious networks. Some support her proposal, such as Kwame Appiah, who elaborates on her fourth argument, the cosmopolitanism challenge to liberalism. Liberalism rests on the belief in universal human rights and the equal dignity of all persons. Liberals take this to be self-evident, but, according to Appiah, they “then seem almost immediately to become preoccupied with looking after the rights of the local branch of the species, forgetting...that their rights matter as human rights and thus matter only if the rights of foreign humans matter, too” (2002: 25). It is precisely cosmopolitanism’s allegiance to humanity at large that “brings every other person into the domain of concern, without eliminating anyone,” writes another supporter, Amartya Sen (2002: 114).

Most of Nussbaum’s respondents however, disagree with her proposal and make a communitarian case against it. The problem with cosmopolitanism, they believe, is that there is no there there. Local, thick, warm commitments naturally and inevitably trump the thin, cool idealism of a far-away utopian ideal, they contend. No one actually, on the ground, is a world citizen. No one lives in ‘the world.’ Rather, “our attachments start parochially and only then grow outward,” writes Benjamin Barber (2002, p. 34). In this perspective community is personal, allegiance is national, and it is a one-way movement *from* the personal *to* the national. The coolness of humanity at the global scale doesn’t engage ‘real’ people because it is too distant, too abstract—unreal. Loyalty, Hilary Putnam writes, is needed “to what is best in our traditions, including our national and ethnic *traditions*” (2002, p. 97, emphasis added). Directing students’ loyalties towards a civic space that can barely be imagined let alone *felt* (in contrast with the often-rehearsed and supposedly natural and profound national imaginary) would leave them nowhere, goes this critique. Belonging and patriotism are necessarily local, not cosmic, affairs.

A somewhat different assessment of Nussbaum’s call for a cosmopolitan education also relies on the supposed naturalness of national affinity and its ongoing importance in the constitution of human rights. According to Putnam (2002), for example, national patriotism supplies a supporting framework in which demands for civic equality and group rights become conceivable and actionable. Historically, numerous social movements have relied on the nation as the backstop for liberal

demands to recognition and/or equity. Leaders of the civil rights movement and the women's suffrage movement both relied on principles and values they believed were embedded in a specifically *national* narrative of equality, liberty, and freedom. In his famous March on Washington address in 1963, for example, Martin Luther King, Jr. gave an object lesson in national patriotism deployed against the status quo. He declared that he and all who had joined him at the Lincoln Memorial had:

...come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of the Republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir (King 2001: 81-82; see also McConnell 2002: 80-81).

Earlier, the women at Seneca Falls, New York, asserted their rights by using the terms and grammar of that same Declaration. In both cases, the purpose of the struggle was to close the gap between the reality and the ideals of the nation, as stated in its founding documents.

Throughout these writings is an assumption of the nation as a natural endpoint or backstop of philosophical and practical allegiance and, for Nussbaum and her followers, a necessity to break down this affinity through education in order to transcend the contemporary limitations of modern national identity. We believe that the suppositions made here are premised on what Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) have termed "methodological nationalism," an inability of those working in the humanities and social sciences to break free from the 'container' model of thinking. Methodological nationalism is primarily an inability to escape dichotomizations such as nation and globe or patriot *versus* cosmopolitan or to understand the potentialities for identity formation in terms other than static imaginations of scales and allegiances. It is also limited in its reliance on ongoing, received structures of meaning rather than perceiving the temporal, hybrid, and constructed nature of contemporary identities.

Troubling the Binary

Our empirical data is derived from group interviews with approximately 250 students at three high schools (two private, one public) and two middle schools (one private, one public) in a western metropolitan area in the United States in the winter of 2003. This was at the time when the war in Afghanistan was underway and the invasion of Iraq was imminent. The interviews were conducted by [blind], a geographer, in the students' classrooms with the teacher present. Groups consisted of 15-25 students. Prior to the classroom interviews, [blind] conducted a focus group conversation with four of the five teachers whose classrooms were to be visited. Its purpose was to form the questions and choose the images and literature that would serve as prompts for the classroom discussions. These

teachers were identified using the ‘snowball’ technique—one interested teacher suggested another—thus composing a theoretical sample of teachers who were curious to learn how their students’ were thinking about the geography of allegiance following 9/11.

First, students were apprised of our general research themes—patriotism, citizenship, and allegiance—and our interest in how these concepts are understood by young people in general, as well as how they might or might not be affected by ‘moments of crisis’ such as the recent events of September 11th. The students were then shown two images and read one poem and asked to write about their impressions for ten minutes. One image was the popular photo of three male firefighters raising the U. S. flag amid the rubble of the fallen towers. The other was of the flag juxtaposed with the towers and the phrase, “God Bless America.” The poem, titled “When We Were All New Yorkers,” empathizes with the people of New York City although the author does not live there. Following the brief writing period, [blind] led a group discussion, prompting initial responses with the following questions: “What is your impression of this image (poem)?” and “What do you think this image (poem) is about: what does it represent?” [blind] occasionally asked follow-up questions to students’ oral responses. During and following the classroom discussions, [blind] took notes which, along with students’ written responses, later served as the material for analysis.

When We Were All New Yorkers...³
by William F. House

I am a New Yorker. I have never lived there though. I am not from the great state of New York, nor am I from the city therein. I’ve not even spent much time there. I’ve spent more time in New York via film than I have with my feet actually touching its soil. But I am a New Yorker...since September 11, 2001...

I am many people. I am connected to them; as they are to me. I have not always been all these people, but from that morning...when the bright morning sky was filled with smoke and fear...and later resolved and cleared to a new nation...I was as connected to them as I am to my own family.

I am a father. I am a husband. I am a bank officer and a grocery store clerk. I am the Mayor and I am a janitor. I am a window washer and a Wall St. broker. I am from Manhattan and the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island. I am a civilian and I am an enlisted man. I am an American...I am a New Yorker.

The written statements and the quotes from oral responses that we reproduce here were selected to provide some evidence of the contingent, flexible, and often contradictory feelings concerning affinity and belonging held by many, though not all, of these 11 to 16 year-olds. Some

³ Source: Excerpt by William F. House, published in the *San Juan Islander* newspaper, San Juan Islands, WA. www.sanjuanislander.com/events/setp1101/william-house.html

responses were strongly ‘patriotic’ in the more traditional sense of showing deep allegiance to the nation. Interestingly, the general tone of the written responses (completed first) was somewhat more patriotic in a ‘nationalistic’ sense than the general tenor of the majority of oral responses. For example,

{God Bless America [GBA]} “This image makes me feel proud to be an American and to be living in this great country. The flag gives me a sense of freedom, blessing, and togetherness.” (public high school, written)

{Poem} “United as a country, makes me feel like we are all in this together, we all make up this one country and whatever affects one group of people affects us all.” (public high school, written)

{Firefighters} “It makes all my feelings from the day come back. I feel proud of all the firefighters and people who helped to try to find victims in the wreckage. It portrays that America can get over anything and rise above it, just as the flag is being raised in the image.” (private high school, written)

A number of factors may have contributed, including the fact that the oral group discussions were often initiated and occasionally dominated by students who felt strongly about the war in Afghanistan and the (then) potential war in Iraq and who linked these events with the types of nationalistic images and poem we showed them. These students were usually quite articulate and well informed about these events and thus might have intimidated—either by the strength of their feelings or the breadth of their knowledge—other students who felt or knew differently.

Our data are also particular to the northern inner-city and suburban schools of the city where we undertook this inquiry. This urban area clearly reflects a ‘blue state’ political sensibility in many respects. This ‘liberal’ or centrist bias was manifested in the presidential vote of 2004, in which the city voted by a majority of approximately 80% for the Democratic contender John Kerry over the current Republican incumbent, George W. Bush. In the county that contains this metro area as well as rural populations, Kerry received 65% of the vote. It should also be noted that both income and education levels are higher in the neighborhoods where we conducted this work.

We want to emphasize that we do not provide these quotes to suggest that the national scale is insignificant or that national patriotism is dead and buried. Rather, we use the writings and voices of these students to manifest some of the fallacies evident in the unreflective assumptions about naturally scaled and contained affinities that dominate the literature on the subject today. We hope to give some insight into the often transient and constructed nature of allegiances, which shift in relation to factors as seemingly ‘minor’ as everyday peer pressure and speaking order in discussion to those as

‘significant’ as national moments of crisis, as well as to the ever-changing economic, political, and social circumstances in which youth live.

We begin with a group of responses that suggest the temporality or transience of sentiment (for some of these teens, it is anything but constant; it has a ‘shelf life’) and an awareness of the commodification (commercialization) of sentiment. These are connected. The profiteering is, as an 11th grader put it, “meant to make you remember” after the point where you may have forgotten. We then turn to a group of responses that suggest something different: a striking spatial flexibility, as if to say, “concentric circles be damned, you can’t predict my affinities.”

Temporary allegiances and the commodification of sentiment

First, we highlight the temporal flexibility of allegiance in these students’ responses. The short-lived nature of patriotic fervour is evident in the diminishing meaning for students of nationalistic symbols and images such as the American flag juxtaposed with sayings such as “God Bless America” that appeared following the September 11th attacks. Many felt that this type of sentiment was appropriate for certain moments and places but should not be overdone. For one student, the image of firefighters raising the American flag had been emotionally charged initially but subsequently felt “manipulative” with the passage of time. She said:

{Firefighters} “Now when I look at it, I feel that it’s manipulative. But at first I thought it was very moving.” (Tenth-grader, private school, oral)

A second wrote of his/her initial pride in pictures of the American flag, but subsequent ‘immunity’ to these kinds of images as a result of their overuse:

{God Bless America [GBA]} “I’m sort of immune to any feelings when I see images like these because they have been so overused since September 11th. But, when I first began seeing them pop up on the street I did feel a swell of pride that my country is strong enough to deal with the crisis in a positive way.” (Ninth-grader, public school, written).⁴

A number of other students also spoke directly of the ‘overuse’ of certain kinds of patriotic images, and of their subsequent loss of meaning. For some this was exacerbated by the problem of retaining sympathy across distance:

{GBA} “I feel like the “God Bless America” thing with the flag, etc. has been done to death. You always see the little bumper stickers and you see them so much that it gets to a point where it doesn’t mean anything anymore.” (Tenth-grader, private school, written)

⁴ Minor grammatical and spelling errors were corrected in some written responses.

{GBA} “These kinds of images were overused. They lose their meaning. It didn’t directly affect people on the West Coast. That causes us to lose interest.” (Ninth-grader, public school, oral)

{GBA} “I don’t really feel anything. All of these slogans are so redundant that I feel numb.” (Ninth-grader, public school, written)

Several students also indicated impatience with the amount of time that seemed to be expected of them to dwell on the national tragedy. They expressed their desire to move on by indicating the actual passage of time since September 11th in addition to commenting on the overuse of patriotic symbols. They wrote of their patriotic sentiment as if it were a thing that might be required for a specific situation but could quickly be used up.

{GBA} “Our flag is pretty-umm...9/11 was a year and a half ago... my traumatization is done.” (9th grader, public school, written)

{GBA} “We see it so much. It was a year ago. It’s over. Enough now.” (9th grader, public school, oral)

{GBA} “I don’t think those two images should be placed together. The destruction of the towers is not something we should dwell on for too long. It’s not what America stands for. While we should remember this, we should look to the future, and not stay in the past.” (6th grader, private school, written).

{GBA} “I have no immediate feelings. This was a year and a half ago. We’re now immune to feelings like that. Now images like this are everywhere. They’re used for commercials. We’re immune to it.” (9th grader, public school, oral)

This last comment especially, in addition to expressing exhaustion and immunity with respect to 9/11 sentiment and a desire to move on, also indicates an awareness of the commercialization of that sentiment. Other students also reacted negatively to their sense that some persons or corporations were profiting from the tragedy by stirring up nationalist feelings:

{GBA} “I don’t like this image. It’s probably out of a Burger King—so they can make a buck from patriotic sentiment” (11th grader, public school, oral)

{GBA} “I feel ashamed. I went to New York and the vendors were selling shirts like this. People used the event to make money out of it.” (9th grader, public school, oral)

The teenagers we interviewed were clearly aware of the links of particular forms of patriotism to profit-making ventures (such as the attempt to create nationalist sentiment and ‘make a buck’ at the same time). In this they show an implicit understanding of the ways in which nationalism can be invoked in the interests of capitalist formations. In a class dialogue the rejection of the profit-motive element in patriotic sentiment was also directly linked with memory and the ways in which

memory can be staged and manipulated. Students resisted any sentiment which they felt had been manufactured for a specific purpose, whether for political purchase or for economic gain. They didn't want to be 'told' what to remember or when:

"It's okay for remembrance or charity but not for profit."

"I feel manipulated. Is this for sale?"

"Like Bush's speech: buy things to make America strong."

"I don't like manipulation. I don't like all the stuff that's meant to make you remember." (11th graders *in dialogue*, public school, oral)⁵

Combining the categories of temporality and commodification, we suggest that in these responses are indications both of resistance and a kind of transience with respect to specific kinds of nationalist sentiment. Patriotic memory appears to have what might be termed a 'shelf-life' of emotive energy for many young people. A large number were extremely sympathetic and deeply moved by the events of September 11th, yet there was a point at which they felt that the public expression of these sentiments became manipulative, profit-oriented, and/or overtly politicized. These teens were wary of sentiment that seemed to be expected of them, especially when they perceived it as linked to commodification. They also expressed the desire to move on and "look to the future," rather than repeatedly replay what they felt was a bleak and tragic moment in the nation's history. Although for many adults the adage may hold that 'history' isn't really 'History' for at least a generation or so, for many of these students only a year and a half of temporal distance was quite enough.

The speed at which events become history and 'expected' memory is rejected was underpinned in interesting ways by the students' sense of spatial allegiance to the *city*. Several students expressed a strong positive affinity for their city. For them, their identity as citizens was not associated first and foremost with the national scale but rather was connected with their feelings of affinity and shared culture, which they considered to be strongest at the urban scale.

{Poem and follow-up question on citizenship}

"I don't have a national identity."

"I feel more responsible to the world, but I'm a citizen of the United States."

⁵ This group of quotes captures a conversation that occurred between a number of students during a group interview. These dialogic quotes (versus individual quotes) are indicated by the italicized notation "*in dialogue*."

“I feel like a [city name]—it’s way more potent.”

“I live here. I’m here everyday. It’s a different country.”

“We share our views. As a city we share our culture.”

“I agree with the [city] culture. I feel more that I’m a [city] citizen.” (10th graders *in dialogue*, private school, oral)

{Firefighters and follow-up question on the meaning of citizenship}

“Citizenship is obeying the law, getting a job.”

“There’s a legal way to look at it but I don’t associate American citizenship with American pride. I associate it with being a member of a community and that makes me a citizen of [suburb name].”

“It’s more than a legal definition. Citizenship is who you associate yourself with, the places you know, where you drive, buy your food, where you go to work.” (11th graders *in dialogue*, public school, oral)

This urban identification, while strongly felt for most of these teenagers, is unlikely to continue with such deep resonance over the course of a lifetime. The majority of Americans are profoundly mobile vis-à-vis both employment and residence as a result of the flexible and unpredictable nature of contemporary global capitalism (Beck 2000; Cox 1997; Harvey 1989). With respect to urban sentiment it is common that through time the “churning instability of capitalism... creates a sort of indifference about physical place” (Sennett 2003: 47). Sennett refers here specifically to the experience of cosmopolitanism in the city, which he believes is changing in nature from a charged and exciting embrace of alterity (strangeness, the unknown) to a “regime of differences” that is carefully delineated and controlled.

Flexible Allegiances and Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism

In addition to the highly contingent quality of patriotism expressed above with respect to time and commodification, our interviews indicated as well a strong spatial flexibility. There does not appear for these young people to be a particular direction taken by affinity from in to out or, as communitarians such as Barber (2002) would put it, from warm to cool, but rather a constant shifting of scales of meaning and allegiance depending on context. This can be the everyday context of peer

relations, such as who has spoken first in a group discussion, or it can be the broader context of national crisis or global economics and politics.

The teenagers we interviewed were quite able and willing to move in a non-linear, multi-directional manner from immediate, directly perceived and embodied viewpoints and affinities to far more abstracted and distant positions and back again. This ability and willingness was not shared by all, yet the class discussions themselves seemed to have an impact on the students, with sentiments moving in and out and back and forth depending on the context of each person's utterance within the group dialogue. The class discussion below displays discursive movement through different scales of affinity, ending with one student's expressed inability to be affected at any scale other than the immediate. The teenagers here can be seen to be experimenting as a group vis-à-vis scales of affinity and belonging:

{Poem} "Most devastation wasn't New York—our nation's capital was also hit. This affected everyone. I don't feel like a New Yorker because of it."

"I don't like 'poor New York.' It should be poor America."

"At the end of the poem he should have added, 'I am an Afghani.'"

"It didn't affect me because I'm so far away." (11th graders *in dialogue*, public school, oral)

The sentiments of this last student were shared by the following student, who wrote strongly that (s)he felt a total lack of affinity for anyone (s)he didn't know.

{Poem} "I guess that's what he feels like. However I myself was unable to connect with what the guy's saying because to tell you the truth, I don't care what the hell happens to people I don't know. Yeah, it's sad all those people died and crap, but they're just a bunch of dead people whom I don't know." (Ninth-grader, public school, written).

This somewhat aggressive expression of the unwillingness or incapacity to transcend the limitations of abstraction and distance was far less evident in the oral discussions, where group sentiment tended to fold in and out of different scales of allegiance as individual students considered questions of patriotism, citizenship, and affinity from numerous perspectives:

{Poem} "It's kind of stupid—the attack doesn't make you a New Yorker. It affected people around the world. We have to move on."

"It's a metaphor; it's taking a New Yorker as an American. He's saying he's an American."

“The poem represented unity. Unity tends to push other people out. Bush, he’s about evil—let’s push out the evil. There’s lots of negative energy going into unity.”

“Even though we weren’t directly affected, it’s because we’re united as a country. As a country we’re one and we are Americans.” (Ninth-graders *in dialogue*, public school, oral).

{GBA} “It’s really odd—attention was focused on New York when another plane hit the Pentagon. Why?”

“People see heroism in it, and patriotism too.”

“Significantly more people died in the World Trade Center. People lost friends and family. A lot of people were affected.”

“Thousands of people die every day from hunger. Let’s not care about those others....”

“It’s ironic—the flag represents nationalism, but the attack was about globalization. We’re globalizing...” (Ninth-graders *in dialogue*, public school, oral).

Children and adolescents are flexible subjects in that they are in the process of *becoming* in the literal sense of ongoing interaction and growth, but also in the more generalized sense of experimentation and movement (Dewey 1902, 1985). But this becoming has a spatial dynamic as manifested in the ease with which groups of students move between scales of national, global, and urban identification and allegiance, and the ease with which they learn from each other in the process. Sunaina Maira (2004: 206) argues that young people have been neglected in philosophical discussions about globalization, patriotism, and citizenship at least partially because they are perceived as “inadequately formed adults” rather than as subjects with their own needs, perceptions, and desires. Their culture of experimentation and hybridization, of movement and change is often belittled or neglected as liminal and/or inadequate precisely because of its lack of fixity. The standard beliefs about the development of adolescent identity imply that “youth are proceeding toward a desirable end goal, which is to be realized only and always in adulthood” (207). Thus their perceptions and understandings about concepts such as citizenship and their feelings such as those around allegiance are not validated as legitimate positions to hold but rather are seen as the febrile or even deviant expressions of untutored subjects. Maira writes,

There is often an assumption in traditional work on youth and citizenship, for example, that young citizens—to the extent that they have rights, which are often

limited—must be socialized into adult norms of political involvement rather than being considered thinking agents who may express important critiques of citizenship and nationhood (p. 206; see also Buckingham 2000: 13).

Furthermore, it is crucial to remember that children today have been born into a world that is interdependent and interconnected and that they *already* imagine the world globally. In contrast with Nussbaum's Greek philosophers whose metaphor of slow, steady, outward-moving concentric circles matched their own possibilities with respect to the flows of information and travel, today's children are "growing up global" (Katz 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard 2004) to an unprecedented degree. They have *already* made connections with other places through multiple channels of information and experience. As Vertovec and Cohen (2002: 2) put it, "Many individuals now seem to be, more than ever, prone to articulate complex affiliations, meaningful attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, people, places and traditions that lie beyond the boundaries of the nation-state."

A temporal and flexible attitude towards allegiance thus plays out against a backdrop of an already existing cosmopolitanism, in the sense of a vernacular, workaday understanding of the globally interconnected nature of the world. For example, several of the students we interviewed expressed 'disappointment' at the artificial nature of (national) boundaries separating people. And some remarked specifically about the undesirability of an increased American nationalism brought on by the 9/11 attacks:

{GBA} "To me it's a disappointing image because its got boundaries as to who belongs under the flag. I'd like to see the world as everyone being one nation instead of all Americans being one nation." (10th grader, private school, written)

{GBA} "Before the towers fell down nobody would even notice this picture, but now, after everything that happened this is a BIG deal. 9/11 didn't just affect America, it affected the whole world. This picture should say "God bless the world" not "God bless America" also not everyone believes in God." (8th grader, private school, written)

For most of the students we interviewed there appeared to be an already existing global awareness accompanied by a strong desire to rework existing boundaries to reflect the growing interdependence of the world. These students were not satisfied with the pre-formed 'alternatives they felt were represented by the American flag, but rather wanted their flag and the symbol of the World Trade Towers to encompass all those affected by the terrorist attacks. In a sense this represents a desire for a contextualized, historically articulated form of 'patriotism' related to the impact of specific events or processes rather than to rigid boundaries. Those affected by the fall of the towers should be included in the picture, a symbol of patriotic sentiment, not just those who happened to live within a specific national territory.

Perhaps because this city was the site of the World Trade Organization protests in 1999, these students had some sense of the processes of globalization and its many discontents. Their feelings of relationality however, were not necessarily as world citizens (à la Nussbaum) but rather were expressed as an awareness/construction of the world as, for better or for worse, profoundly interdependent. This awareness was sometimes expressed with strong political views and other times as the projection of humanitarian warmth across national borders. The following students made connections to both when discussing the links between America's "pain" and the pain of others caused by the ensuing wars:

{GBA} "September 11th blinded the people of America into only seeing America. People should think about the civilians who died but not..."

"The government is using it as an excuse to bomb Iraq."

"It impacted us and gave us pain—now we're going to do it to the rest of the world." (8th graders *in dialogue*, private school, oral)

Here the students wrestled with what they saw as the unfairness of causing pain to others, despite the great pain that was caused to America. Many students thus expressed strong feelings of resistance to a form of nationalism that they felt privileged the United States in relation to other nations or societies. Their sense of allegiance was often heartfelt (and in some cases deeply wounded by what they saw as unjust wars in the Middle East) but at the same time it resisted easy categorization, often slipping between geographical scales, sometimes within the space of a single utterance:

{Poem} "The poem is obviously a patriotic one I think. When people think about 9/11 they should think of the people that died so in a way it was a compassionate poem but again New York and America are not the only ones affected by 9/11. I wish someone would write a poem about the children of Iraq going to war because of two egotistical leaders." (8th grader, private school, written).

At one level this statement could be taken as an example of a cosmopolitan empathy of the kind advocated by Nussbaum. But a deeper reading brings out the ways in which the formation of scales of affinity is always contingent, flexible, and transient. For these young people, patriotic allegiance is linked to the actions of human beings in particular situations—situations that are always structured by macro forces such as geopolitics and global capitalism. It is through these actions and beliefs and the macro processes that constrain them that scales are constructed and their associated allegiances made and remade.

Conclusion

The ongoing debates in U. S. education concerning the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools (e.g., *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, 02-1624, U.S. Sup. Ct., June 14, 2004), the content of national history and literature courses (e.g., Zimmerman, 2002), and teaching about ‘patriotism,’ ‘cosmopolitanism,’ and ‘the war on terror’ (e.g., Finn, 2003)—these debates are well worth joining. However, the discursive platform of these debates has been circumscribed by a static (mis)understanding of space, especially as concerns the production of scale. We have argued that scale should not be understood as a fixed, given category of analysis but rather as something that is produced (and reproduced) in relation to the material and cultural world and that the ‘Nussbaum debate’ itself generates a discourse that presents a bifurcated conception of the scales of allegiance.

The understanding of spatial scales as socially produced is important because it allows us to see boundaries and their associated affinities as changing and changeable, and it allows us also to interrogate the whys and hows of these changes. It also focuses our attention on the ways in which space is not an empty container or theatre in which social action occurs, but rather is productive of social action and vice versa in a mutually constitutive dynamic (Pred 1984; Soja 1989; Massey 2005). This insight releases us from the static and in our view unhelpful, pre-given categories and dichotomizations such as patriot *versus* cosmopolitan, or patriot *and* cosmopolitan. It encourages us rather to view human actions (constrained by multiple structuring forces in society) as generative of these scales, both in terms of space and affinity.

We found that the young people we talked with in this metro area were, generally, expressing an historicized affinity—one that is constructed, contingent, and impermanent. Yet educators often seek to inscribe young people with specific ideal type relations and allegiances at various scales, and traditionally they have believed this to be their duty (e.g., Green, 1997); hence the recitation (or not) of the *Pledge* in schools and the singing (or not) of state songs (*I Love You, California; Texas, Our Texas; Washington, My Home*; etc.). In contrast to this ‘container’ model of allegiance, we believe that the temporary, flexible, and relational nature of allegiance articulated by a good number of our respondents deserves our notice and, perhaps, our rethinking the work of educators *vis a vis* allegiance. Instead of viewing children and youth as unformed, unaware, and hence supremely malleable subjects who should be educated *into* firmly scaled positions as world citizens (as preferred by Nussbaum) or *into* national citizens (as desired by her many critics), educators might notice and validate their transient and flexible understandings of scale and allegiance and interrogate the relationship of these to the macro structuring forces of global capitalism and geopolitics. It is possible that these teenagers’ expressions of the contingency of affinity offers an important critique of

contemporary citizenship norms and that, in this way, they operate as democratic agents in their own right.

What does this examination of the Nussbaum debate and these youths' responses to 9/11 and its immediate aftermath mean for education for democratic citizenship? It means that citizens-in-formation may not fit neatly into the spatial models of affinity that have been constructed in some contemporary (and ancient) literatures, and that some youthful citizens-in-formation are displaying more flexibility than the linear inner-to-outer concentric-circles model would permit. It means that the conception of the democratic citizen as a subject-agent who is 'naturally' scaled to the nation is as fictive, contingent, and strategic as the notion that she is 'naturally' scaled to the human family—or to regions, continents, ecosystems, states, the galaxy, or whatever imagined community to which allegiance might serve some key purpose within some particular regime. The choice between nationalism and cosmopolitanism is just a bit too neat, for it de-historicizes the relationship of citizens with space, of schools with citizen formation, and of citizen formation with geopolitics. We remain sympathetic to Nussbaum's project, for it seeks to trouble the national container present in virtually all discussions of civic education, thereby opening new possibilities for imagining a more democratic future. But its binary needs to be troubled, too, to the extent that it forecloses this potential.

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