Curriculum Considerations for Late-arrival High School Immigrant Students: Developing a Critically Conscious World Geography Studies Approach to Citizenship Education

Cinthia Salinas  
University of Texas at Austin  

Caroline Sullivan  
University of Texas at Austin  

Tom Wacker  
University of Texas at Austin  

Abstract  
For late arrival immigrant students, notions of citizenship have been significantly influenced by the dynamic relationships and tensions related to race, language, and citizenship status. In a more critical enactment of a curriculum, we describe a reconceptualization of World Geography Studies for late arrival immigrant students via unique views of citizenship, historical analysis, and ethnic/cultural examinations that can yield a more engaging and inclusive approach. In this qualitative case study we find that a more critically conscious approach to World Geography Studies presents a more multicultural approach to democratic citizenship education.

Introduction  
For Mexican immigrant students who have begun their schooling experience in the United States at the high school level, notions of U.S. citizenship have been significantly influenced by the dynamic relationships and tensions related to race, language, and citizenship status. The dubious acquisition of over half of Mexico (much of current day Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Utah, Colorado, and Nevada) under the provisions of the 1848 Treaty of Hidalgo explains the geopolitical relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. Importantly, the tensions make obvious the ideologies behind English only campaigns and xenophobic compulsions to build a wall between two nations. Although the continuous assaults upon bilingualism and immigration have been a prevalent reminder of the insidious colonization of Mexico, the recent defiance of anti-immigration policies is also evidence of the growing Latino consciousness that makes visible a claim to citizenship (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Indeed, membership to a nation-state remains the site of “political legitimacy and discourse” (Castles, 2004, p. 17). Importantly, Grossman, Cogan, and Hui (2000) have explained that “vast numbers of people are moving across borders, making virtually every country more multiethnic in composition…globalization has made the myth of a culturally homogenous state even more unrealistic” (p. 49).

The abundant and continuous flow of Mexican immigrants into this country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) and growing global and transnational perspectives (Sánchez, 2001) therefore require attention to more complex understandings of citizenry and a school curriculum that is reflective of a multicultural, not homogeneous, nation-state. Educators are presented with viable opportunities to engage in a more critically conscious—in this case race, language, and/or immigration status—examination of how citizenship has been awarded and denied. A rejection of traditional and narrow
notions of citizenship as a white, male, and propertied construct has called for new ways of defining democratic citizenship in relation to cultural, national and global identities and citizenship education (Banks, 2004b; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Unfortunately, citizenship education as it has been currently embedded in the social studies curricula shuns the very facets of ethnic and racial diversity that can contribute to promoting a more just and inclusive democratic society (Banks, 2004b). Accordingly, several studies of citizenship education have urged for a more culturally relevant curriculum that focuses on citizen rights, social controversies, global issues, and preparation for an active and participatory citizenry (Banks, 2004a; Cotton, 2005; Levitt & Longstreet, 1993). In fact, Parker (1996) has argued that the path towards democracy requires the participation of the very citizens who are most often marginalized in the United States. Consequently, in order to sustain and advance ideals of citizenship, immigrants and their children must participate in the same system designed to constrain them.

Given the value and strength of the multicultural mosaic of a multicultural nation-state and unique needs of late arrival immigrant students who arrive in our public schools after the age of 14, new ideals of citizenship and citizenship education demand attention from educators. In this qualitative case study of a late arrival immigrant high school World Geography classroom in Texas, “renegotiating the sense of belonging, inclusion, and full enfranchisement” (Rosaldo, 1993, p. xvii) is portrayed by a different and inclusive approach to curriculum by the secondary social studies teacher teaching this group of students. Although some schools have emphasized the teaching of American History (Salinas, 2006) for late arrival immigrant students, World Geography Studies is typically the first course in the high school social studies sequence. Notably, the course has been typically peripheral to state level exams and is less text oriented than other social studies courses. Moreover, the study of geography is inherently entwined with the study of human culture and hence presents an ethnic/racial diversity that is both dynamic and relevant to late arrival immigrant students. In examining a more critically conscious enactment of a World Geography Studies course, we begin our discussion by framing deliberations regarding citizenship that may be nurtured in a course that attends to the interactions between diverse human cultures and geography. We argue a reconceptualization of World Geography Studies for late arrival immigrant students via unique views of citizenship, historical analysis, and ethnic/cultural examinations can yield a more inclusive curriculum. We find that the positioning of a race, language and citizenship status conscious approach to World Geography Studies and the promotion of critical multicultural social studies presents a more critical approach to democratic citizenship education.

**A More Critically Conscious Study of Geography**

A more critically conscious ideal of citizenship education has provided an opportunity for learners to “better understand their cultural knowledge, to learn the consequences of embracing it, and to understand how it relates to mainstream academic knowledge…[and] to participate effectively in their cultural communities, other cultural communities, the mainstream culture, and in the global community” (Banks, 2004b, p. 13). Reconceptualized notions of World Geography Studies can provide ample opportunities to sustain late arrival immigrant students’ unique cultural ideologies in the construction of citizenship. For example, Melissa Alcala (pseudonym) and her twenty-two Latina/o late arrival immigrant students at Santa Anna HS (pseudonym) complicated the official World Geography Studies curriculum and ideals of citizenship sanctioned by the school. During an initial interview she explained,
We [teacher and students] have issues with the textbook because there’s so much more to it. I read [several] articles that really made me think about what we teach our Latino students and how distorted the curriculum is. I just had to make some changes. I had to rethink the material I was teaching. I think to have them really engaged and really thinking takes more. You know—other things we’re gonna get into the cultures and looking at the history and how that affects their present-day lives and communities. The colonization of so many and all these groups coming in from Africa or China are relevant to their lives. And so looking at how that affected them and our society and how race and geography affects the issues for today. They are very comfortable talking about these things because we do it all the time in our thinking and talking about geography.

Overtly, the Americanizing and assimilating function of public schooling that has typically served the economic and political needs of a select few was directly challenged by Ms. Alcala and her late arrival immigrant students’ negotiated curriculum (Cornbleth, 1998). Ms. Alcala purposefully designed and presented to her students a more race, language, and immigration status-conscious view of geography. She explained, “I have to teach this stuff. I know that the story we teach in school excludes their [her students] narratives and excludes the contributions of others. I have to teach a different perspective.” Ms. Alcala redefined and challenged traditional views of citizenship by introducing new pedagogies and curricular choices. Consequently, she was supporting sites of resistance for her late arrival immigrant students. Importantly, Ms. Alcala provided other educators an opportunity to examine a reconceptualization of World Geography Studies as a more race, language, and immigration status-conscious experience for students.

There are obvious instructional reasons for promoting World Geography Studies as an introductory social studies course for late arrival immigrant students. In most states, World Geography Studies is the introductory social studies course and is rarely included on state level exams. In addition, the emphasis of the physical geography tradition is a favored approach for second language learners because of the abundance of visual materials (e.g. maps), significant use of realia (e.g. globes), an interactive propensity of the discipline (e.g. location of latitude/longitude), and familiar prevocabulary teaching practices (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000; Linborg & Ovando, 1998). However, we argue on behalf of a curriculum that is equally compelling and essential in framing new ways of considering the teaching of World Geography Studies and citizenship to late arrival immigrant students. First, the teaching of World Geography Studies is framed by four additional, but often unattended traditions that all center upon culture. Regional, cultural (or human or ecological), spatial, and historical geography unequivocally integrate cultural analysis into various aspects of teaching and learning geography. Second, in order to promote a more critical approach to a World Geography Studies curriculum, notions of revisionist history and those defining structures of the social studies curriculum must yield new ideals of inclusive and democratic citizenship education.

First, the commonly acknowledged but frequently ignored, four other traditions that frame the World Geography Studies curriculum (in addition to physical geography) encompass a valuable interrogation of culture (here noted as race, language, and immigration status). Regional geography approaches, for example, examine the dominance of some aspect of culture in a homogeneous area. Further, human geography has observed the “interrelations of cultural development and
environmental conditions.” In addition, the tradition of spatial geography studies the “movements of trade, people and ideas;” and historical geography uses the dimension of time in order to study human patterns (Banks & Banks, 1999, p. 405). The prominence of culture in other geography traditions reflects a departure from the memorization of capitals and cities and instead presents late arrival immigrant students with indispensable and varied cultural perspectives. Thus, greater prominence has been given to an approach that emphasizes the relationships between cultural groups and the development of regions, cultures, spaces/places, and histories. In multiple ways, late arrival immigrants “give culture a central place in defining their identity, relationship to the world, and sense of rights” (Silvestrini, 1997, p. 40). Consequently, late arrival immigrant students may begin to claim membership to a multicultural nation-state as citizens and agents within a more critical conscious rendition of World Geography Studies curriculum focused on the significance of culture. The sheer presence of diversity in our society or in the classroom does not ensure that teachers will craft a culturally relevant or responsive curriculum (Dilworth, 2004); but it does make certain new dynamics and an exciting opportunity to embrace discomfort, resistance and new pedagogies (Rosaldo, 1993).

Second, reconceptualizing a World Geography Studies course argues initially on behalf of the revisionist scholarship (e.g. Acuña, 1972; e.g. Montejano, 1987; Takaki, 1993) that has attended to the omission and misrepresentation of people of color in the official curriculum (Banks, 1993). San Miguel (1997) has critiqued the description of the Mexican culture in explaining that textbooks “[contain] only disparaging comments about the Mexican presence in the Southwest” (p.44). More importantly, he has noted the physical absence and influence of Mexicanos arguing that according to the official history “little to nothing transpired in Texas worthy of record before the coming of the first Anglo settlers from the United States” (p. 45). Analysis of curriculum materials has revealed that knowledge is not neutral but rather a reflection of power and human interest (Apple, 2003). In challenging traditional narratives, a reconceptualized citizenship education offers views and alternative perspectives that are more indicative of an inclusive and multicultural nation-state. Mexicanos as well as Native Americans were not only physically present but were significantly influential in the development of the Southwest long before Whites entered the area (Acuña, 1972; Montejano, 1987; Takaki, 1993). Central to this discussion is the nature of the construction of knowledge in the social studies curriculum that should be made transparent to late arrival immigrant students. The ways in which inquiry is guided or how the validity of claims is determined becomes valuable in determining the problematic substance of the official curriculum or in developing inclusive and valuable counter narratives (Schwab, 1964; Wineburg & Wilson, 1988).

**Method of Inquiry**

Located in a large central Texas city, Santa Anna H.S. was a mid size high school (1,600 students enrolled) and had a 92% minority enrollment with more than 20% of the students signified as Limited English Proficient. One block from a major interstate highway, Santa Anna HS was deposited in an older, predominantly working class Latino neighborhood. A nearby drive-thru Starbucks and upscale housing renovations, however, demonstrated the impending gentrification of the area. The fifty-year old school building contained five classroom wings, a large “cafetorium,” and numerous portable buildings that hosted special programs (e.g. Career and Technology Education). In the fall of 2006, as a team of social studies educators¹, we began a qualitative case study examination of a reconceptualized World Geography Studies curriculum found in the late arrival social studies
classroom at Santa Anna HS. The bounded system that included this curriculum enacted by this teacher with these students was instrumental to our understanding of a broadened conception of geography, its interaction (or enactment) with late arrival immigrant students and more complex notions of citizenship. Therefore, the instrumental case study approach allowed researchers the opportunity to use multiple data sources in describing the reconceptualization of a World Geography Studies curriculum for late arrival immigrant students in the only social studies classroom context specifically designated for them at Santa Anna H.S. (Stake, 1995). As such, the research question guided the study and data gathering: In what ways may teachers enact a more critically conscious World Geography curriculum?

Over the past few years, the campus has served late arrival immigrant students using several configurations that escape exact categorization (Short, 2002). Tentatively, the campus program could currently be described as a one year Sheltered Language Instruction approach that focused attention upon high school students who had had only been in the U.S. for two years or less. Most students were enrolled in a combination of four core courses including Language Arts (ESL), Science (Integrated Science and Physics or Biology), Mathematics (Algebra I or II), and Social Studies (World Geography Studies or World History Studies) and numerous electives (e.g. Art). Though the district had conducted sporadic staff development in second language acquisition, only the World Geography teacher, Ms. Melissa Alcala, was certified in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. She was in her eighth year of teaching and was completing her master’s degree in Bilingual Education. All the researchers had previously worked with Ms. Alcala because of her role as a cooperating teacher in our Social Studies Teacher Certification Program. Although not an immigrant, Ms. Alcala was of Mexican descent and bilingual. She was purposefully selected by the researchers because of her impressive teaching abilities, her strong ideological stances regarding the importance of creating more critically conscious and valuable educational experiences for late arrival immigrant students, and her understanding of a reconceptualization of citizenship within the World Geography Studies curriculum.

Santa Anna’s hallways were typically busy and crowded, but Ms. Alcala’s classroom was spacious and enrollment in the late arrival program was relatively small. There were only twenty-two late arrival immigrant students, 20 Mexicans, 1 Honduran, and 1 Cuban in her 5th period Sheltered Language Instruction class. None of the students had experienced interrupted schooling experiences but there were varying degrees of English language proficiency present. Ms. Alcala was charged with integrating them into the English-language academic environment at Santa Anna H.S., but contrary to district/campus expectations Spanish was also a valued language in her classroom. Posters of political activists (e.g. César Chávez) and Social Studies artifacts (e.g. the U.S. Constitution) covered the otherwise bland beige walls. Aside from several filled bookcases, a back wall of windows overlooked the school’s tennis courts and portable buildings while Ms. Alcala’s desk was positioned off to the side. An overhead, cart, and large whiteboard took center stage at the front of the room. What was not typical and relatively impossible to describe, was the ease with which the students entered into Ms. Alcala’s classroom. Most students quickly moved towards her at the beginning of class to discuss an assignment or the day’s events—or any matter they knew she would appreciate. Her demeanor was entirely kind and supportive; yet the ringing bell signaled the beginning of formal learning and a dialogue regarding World Geography that was strikingly different from traditional classrooms.
The authors of this study all held a commitment to those critical approaches that promote ways that disrupt the marginalizing and well-inscribed notions of citizenship in the official curriculum (McLaren, 2003). From our perspective as former teachers, citizenship education has forsaken social and cultural diversity to a detrimental adherence to national unity that serves only a narrow conception of a band of elite brethren. In fact, school sanctioned celebrations of political, if not innocuous, differences (e.g. dieciséis de septiembre) minimized the “social and cultural heterogeneity” of a pluralist nation (Parker, 2003, p. 20) and further negated the inverted relationship between otherness and citizenship (Rosaldo, 1993). Consequently, Ms. Alcala’s enactment of a reconceptualized World Geography Studies curriculum that contested traditional notions of citizenship education was an ideal opportunity to examine the different conceptualizations of democratic concepts.

In the fall of 2006, we conducted and later transcribed two digitally recorded interviews in which we discussed with Ms. Alcala her understandings of the World Geography Studies curriculum, the use of unique and valuable traditions and the kinds of foci that can emerge in the teaching of a more critical approach to World Geography in a late arrival immigrant context. We triangulated the interview data by conducting several classroom observations and analyzing the state curriculum (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) and district adopted textbooks and curriculum documents (e.g. Instructional Planning Guide (IPG’s)). Utilizing Miles and Huberman (1994), the data analysis proceeded from noting patterns and themes to arriving at comparisons and contrasts to determining conceptual explanations of the data. For example, during our classroom observations and interviews, we noted Ms. Alcala repeatedly used numerous historical examples and evidence in disrupting the metanarrative. Further development of the themes also distinguished between materials or strategies that presented alternative interpretations that confronted misrepresentations of Latina/o communities.

**Results**

Multicultural late arrival immigrant classrooms have been “both a civil rights agenda for institutional change and an intellectual agenda for testing ideas and projects against a more demanding and diverse range of perspectives” (Rosaldo, 1989, p. xv). Important in the reconceptualization of citizenship education have been notions of the social studies curriculum notably situated within broader social, political, and economic contexts that reveal the importance of race, class, language, and immigrant status. In analyzing the implementation of a reconceptualized curriculum approach we argue through three emerging themes that World Geography Studies were readily recast within more critical ideals of citizenship. First, World Geography Studies provided distinctive opportunities to discuss citizenship and claims/denials to citizenship based on cultural contributions of marginalized yet essential communities. In this instance, differing representations of citizenship added to the complexity of the construct. Second, the entwined nature of geographic history and citizenry revealed the othering of marginalized communities but again defy singular constructs. By highlighting the contributions of other citizens, narrowed constructs become problematic and part of vital conversations about community membership. Third and finally, a race conscious focus of World Geography Studies investigated spatial contexts, patterns and processes between various communities, marginalized and dominant, and shed light on the important interrelationships of place and ethnicity. Here, race became complicitous in the development and destruction of societies.
within a geographic terrain. Throughout our observations and interviews, Ms. Alcala demonstrated the multiple ways in which the study of geography can and does merge culture and citizenship in more critical representations.

First, the World Geography Studies teacher, Ms. Alcala, created a unique space for citizenship deliberation within the curriculum by calling into question claims and denials of cultural contributions that were most relevant to those marginalized cultural communities. The experiences of a “variety of geographical, social, cultural, educational, and linguistic environments” provided late arrival immigrant students with inherently contrasting views of citizenship (Linborg & Ovando, 1998, p. 213). These multiple allegiances along contrasting racial and political axis promoted a divergent understanding of citizenship (Ladson-Billings, 2004). For instance, during an interview, Ms. Alcala noted how the longstanding and well-documented community organizations common during the mid to late 1800’s and early 1900’s (e.g. mutualistas) served to support new immigrant transition into U.S. culture as well as to promote the educational values of the community of Latinas/os (DeLeón, 1982; Salinas, 2000). She explained during an interview that “the US has plenty of documents and decrees that make citizenship an issue of race and class and gender that greatly disadvantage immigrants and yet there is a story of resistance that we need to include in our teaching.” Indeed, both citizenship and the racial divide, well encased in the covenants of the U.S., were confronted as Tejanas/os helped to acculturate immigrants while simultaneously providing economic assistance, upholding the values and beliefs of the Mexican culture, and promoting the Spanish language of Mexicans crossing the newly created border (San Miguel, 1997). In a related example during an interview, Ms. Alcala discussed how the complexity of Mexican-American/Chicana/o citizenship and control (participation) of political contexts in South Texas was, in addition to race, a regional pattern determined by the geographic resources available and subsequent power of landed Mexicano ranchers, Anglo farmers, and/or Mexican and Anglo merchants (Montejano, 1987). During a class discussion, she said “Mexicano ranchers did well in these areas where the land was better for cattle, but Anglo farmers were ready to take these other lands that were better for farming.” A geographic study of the area revealed the advantages gained by ranchers, farmers, or merchants and defied simplistic renditions of who was and who was not entitled to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In the same class session she added, “so it gets kinda complicated. You don’t just have the Anglos coming in and taking over and you just don’t have Mexicanos totally losing their land and money.” Citizenship was not then a right and privilege exclusively for the White propertied male, but rather dual in its nature and dependent upon the power that was directly derived from the geography of the land. Of importance in these examples was the deliberation and complexity of citizenship and its intersection with race/ethnicity and class within the historical and spatial study of geography.

Second, we noted how the spatial and interactional patterns of population traced over time in historical geography exposed the relationship between geography, history, and citizenry. For instance, the social studies metanarrative that has catapulted to mythical status the White male property-seeking American citizens who conquered the West through divine destiny was readily contested by revisionist historians’ counter narratives that eradicated depictions of passive and docile Latina/o communities. These counter narratives inserted in the curriculum a more affirming depictions of powerful and active claims to the relationship between the earths’ geography and other cultural communities (MacDonald, 2004; Moreno, 1999; Takaki, 1993). For example, during one of the classroom sessions she clarified for her students, “Even though Americans took the most land from our Mexicano ancestors, we still held onto some of the land and we still had certain skills...
in working the land that the White people needed. They did not know the rivers, mountains, and soil better than we did.” Ms. Alcala explained to her students that Mexicans may have been strangers in their own land after the Treaty of Hidalgo in 1848, but they were not without valuable cultural resources and understandings of the topography that had given them generations of sustenance. Ms. Alcala noted that the development of the cattle industry in the U.S. was rooted in the Mexican vaquero. During an interview she reminded us, “the vaquero is probably the best example of how the Mexicano has most influenced the US economy and why knowing geography is most important to understanding when and how a group of people—a culture—can be powerful regardless of laws or racism to the contrary.” She and the students discussed the vaqueros’ skills and ability to capitalize on the lands available for grazing, the climate, and the economic activity that was best for their ethnic communities. Acknowledgement of Latina/o culture within a curriculum that described the growth of the United States as an economic power provided “a sense of belonging to a community, a feeling of entitlement, the energy to face everyday adversities, a rational for resistance to a large world in which minority groups feel like aliens in spite of being citizens” (Silvestrini, 1997, p. 43). The critique of the school curriculum by Ms. Alcala demonstrated the inaccurate highlighting of the status of the White American cowboy, selective and ideological nature of the official curriculum, and teaching of a marginalizing view of geography (Apple, 2003; Apple, 1992; Williams, 1961). The counter narrative espoused by Ms. Alcala during our interviews and during her classroom instruction also made visible the valuable contributions made by the Mexican/Tejano vaquero (Allsup, 1983). Notably, the geographic examples the teacher selected drew upon the physical (and arbitrary) shifting of the U.S.-Mexican border, the regional development of powerful economic communities and practices, and the entitlement of citizenry within the U.S.

Third, the use of critical or transformative geography encourages the examination of the intersection between race, ethnicity, gender and geography in exploring spatial contexts, patterns and processes between various groups, and how ethnicity has been influential in people’s perceptions of place (Berry, 1997). Ms. Alcala, for example, used demographic maps during one of her class sessions that described the collision of cultures as the Spaniards moved into Northern Mexico (the current Southwest of the U.S.) and enslaved the Native Americans in the building of missions. During an interview she pointed to the use of maps chronologically and described her rationale, “I show the students all the groups that have come to Texas—or the Southwest—in the name of their country and in the name of making money for their country and themselves even in the name of race. I even show fighting between the Native American tribes. Regardless of how the textbook wants to represent geography—no one is without sin here.” She attended to race and White supremacy and critiqued the ways in which the textbook described the “settlement” of the area. She asked her students during a class exchange, “How did the Native Americans feel when they first met the Spaniards? Of course, they didn’t realize that they had killed so many people and put them as slaves and that they were about to meet the same fate.” In a related class discussion the following week regarding explorers and Christopher Columbus, Ms. Alcala explained, “It depends on whose story they want to tell. Are you gonna write that you [referring to Columbus] killed thousands of people and you treated them like slaves for the sake of gathering resources and staking land in the name of Spain?” The introduction of counter narratives were used to Ms. Alcala to reveal complex ethnicities and representation of cultures within world geography knowledge. The introduction of an explicit framework by Ms. Alcala allowed for viewing others in the formal curriculum by “consider[ing] alternative viewpoints,” (Rosen, 1997, p. 11). During a follow up interview Ms. Alcala explained that in studying these examples of missions or explorers’ narratives,
the students were given the opportunity to recognize the dubious nature of “official stories” and their own ethnic identities as mestizos –both colonizing Spaniards and colonized Native Americans. Interestingly, messy representations of geography and citizenship were common in the way Ms. Alcala viewed the World Geography curriculum.

In any sheltered language World Geography Studies classroom the significance of physical geography and second language learner instructional strategies are apparent. However, in this qualitative case study we describe how a teacher enacted a more critical rendition of curriculum that inserted multiple representations of citizenship through the study of all the traditions of World Geography and purposeful attention to the lives of late arrival immigrant students. The curriculum interrupted traditional depictions of citizenship and challenges educators to reconsider the homogeneity of the nation state as it is represented in official school knowledge.

**Discussion**

In this project, we examine the reconceptualization of a World Geography Studies course by a secondary social studies teacher in a late arrival immigrant classroom. The enactment or positioning of a more critically conscious curriculum in relation to those wider political and contextual constructs related to race, language, and immigration status is vital in coming to new understandings of our multicultural nation-state. The image of “cultural invaders” and/or second-class citizens for Latinas/os emphasizes a “struggle to build communities, claim social rights, and become recognized as active agents in society” (Flores & Benmayor, 1997, p. 2). Accordingly, a more critically conscious examination of race, ethnicity, gender, language, and portrayals of legitimate citizenship through World Geography Studies are deliberately presented in a reconceptualized curriculum. We find initially, that the other four traditions associated with the teaching of World Geography Studies are essential in framing more critical multicultural notions of citizenship. Second, we find that teachers’ knowledge and willingness to enact a reconceptualized curriculum is equally essential in shifting away from narrow constructs of citizenship in a traditional nation state.

The use of geography in teaching and learning citizenship is rooted in those geographic questions and traditions that have continuously guided the field. Young students, including late arrival immigrants, ought to be able to ask questions about “Why things are where they are and how they got there...Where is something located? Why is it there? With what is it associated?” (Bednarz, Bettis, Bohem, DeSouza, Downs, Marran, Morril, & Salter, 1994, p. 42). Attention to regional, human, spatial, and historical geography complies with the broader framing of the study of World Geography Studies. In reconceptualizing World Geography Studies within the realm of critical multicultural citizenship education, we ensure multiple understandings of citizenship, a revisionist account of others’ contributions to our citizenry, and a critical consciousness that attends to the value of racial diversity (Salinas, 2006). Attention to other elements of geography does not diminish the physical study of the earth but rather emphasizes the ways in which humans make use of space, move across continents, and inscribe historical significance for societies to understand. Moreover, in this way, citizenship constructs become politically and culturally complex and contested ideals open to deliberation.

A significant challenge in promoting the five traditions of World Geography Studies enters into the realm of acknowledging a body of content that redefines American citizenship. Undoubtedly a reconceptualization of citizenship education within the World Geography Studies curriculum is limited by several factors including the degree of influence of standardized curriculum documents and the expectations of state level exams. Distinctly, none of the examples or counter narratives
included in the teaching of World Geography Studies in this case study was made available through official curriculum materials. In order to disrupt portrayals of citizenship as a White, male and propertied possession, the curriculum and teachers then must include a “political consciousness and the drive for self-empowerment [that] have encouraged many social groups to seize control of their own histories and recontextualize the images of their national, ethnic, or gender past from within their own communities” (Cuello, 2000, p. 2). In sum, a reconceptualization of World Geography Studies relies upon representations of citizenship and the interplay between race, language and legal status. Thus embracing new and counter approaches to citizenship education within World Geography Studies entails a body of knowledge and constructs that challenge marginalizing assumptions about power and the narrow tenets of citizenship (Banks, 1993). More critically conscious notions of citizenship then require that educators make sense of how citizenship can and should be situated within or in opposition to the traditional curriculum. Given the magnitude of content area of the World Geography Studies course, the disruption and expansion of the official curriculum is a paramount and yet daunting task that demands our attention.

Conclusion

“Becoming a citizen,” Ong (1996) has explained, “depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations” (p. 738). The perspective mandates that social studies educators reconstruct citizenship education curriculum from that of passive consumption to active and critically conscious deconstruction of the official school knowledge. In particular, immigrant communities and those late arrival immigrant students must be afforded opportunities to become agents of change for the sake of our democratic society (Parker, 2003). In reconceptualizing World Geography Studies we argue on behalf of a culturally bound examination of earth and society—one that will become inclusive and capable of interacting with physical, regional, human, spatial, and historical traditions and lenses of examination. No doubt a multicultural nation-state and the ensuing notion of citizenship makes valuable the examination of diversity of race, language, and immigration status indispensable.
References


(Endnotes)
¹ The data set is part of a larger project (start date 2004) that included Language Arts/Bilingual Education colleagues and research in several school sites in Texas and one site in Colorado. Only social studies data in a singular site is included in discussion.