


# Operationalizing and Researching Cosmopolitan Adult Education: Collaborative Inquiry Frameworks for Adult Educators' International Cross-Cultural Study of Learning and Knowing

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## Operationalizing Cosmopolitan Adult Education: Collaborative Inquiry Frameworks for Adult Educators' International Cross-Cultural Study of Learning and Knowing

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**Abstract:** A discussion on cosmopolitan adult development and research in progress on the use of comparative, collaborative inquiry as a method to enhance adult educators' cosmopolitan worldviews.

**Keywords:** cosmopolitanism; cosmopolitan adult education; cross-cultural adult learning and teaching; international adult education; adult study abroad

Sociopolitical and economic contexts of local, national, and global relations require adults to engage in informed, culturally-sensitive coexistence and dialogue. As such, adult higher education and professional learning organizations are focusing their efforts to internationalize their campuses and learning experiences. The purpose of this roundtable presentation is to discuss a study in progress investigating the learning and development toward enhanced worldviews and a cosmopolitan stance for adult education graduate students engaged in structured reflection and discussion activities based on a collaborative, comparative inquiry framework for international, cross-cultural study of learning and knowing.

### Study Background

Cosmopolitanism has ancient origins and is currently rooted in philosophy, ethics, politics, and education. Kleingeld and Brown (2014) provide distinctions across different philosophical underpinnings of cosmopolitanism that include moral cosmopolitanism that requires a duty to respect and uphold basic human rights across all peoples. Political cosmopolitans believe in the need for a unified international political state that attends to global social justice focused on issues such as poverty, the environment, and war crimes. Cultural cosmopolitanism rejects nativism and recognizes individual cultural bonds and encourages diversity and multiculturalism. Finally, economic cosmopolitanism avows the need for a single, global economic market focused on free trade and little political regulation. This form of cosmopolitanism is widely considered neoliberal and ascribed to more by politicians and

economists rather than educators and philosophers. As an educational approach, cosmopolitan's goal is often to incorporate cross-cultural learning, dialogue, and story-telling to help learners move beyond strict dichotomies of local and global, and particular and universal (Donald 2007). Further, Coryell, Sehin, and Peña (2018) assert that research utilizing cosmopolitan theoretical tenets in adult education contexts suggests a variety of approaches for cosmopolitan development in adulthood. These include developing enhanced worldviews and cosmopolitan viewpoints through opportunities for learners that include "international mobility experiences, cross-cultural interactions (at home and abroad), collaboration and problem-solving with diverse perspectives and backgrounds, and deep self-reflection on one's local, regional, national, and global loyalties and viewpoints, were imperative" (p. 23).

### **The Current Study**

The current study poses the possibility of using a comparative collaborative inquiry approach to assist in developing a cosmopolitan stance. Collaborative inquiry offers learners the opportunity to pursue their curiosities (questions) through individual and collective reflection, action research, and dialogue. The literature suggests that collaborative inquiry encourages educators and students to identify questions; conduct inquiries into learning, teaching, and knowing; explore current literature; and to analyze critically their own personal experiences, existing theory, and practices (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000; Drennon & Cervero, 2002). The present research is investigating the use of a comparative, collaborative inquiry framework with a discussion-based teaching method grounded in cosmopolitan tenets. Two different courses consisting of four different sections/groups of students who took these classes at various times, comprise the research context. The courses focused specifically on international, cross-cultural adult learning, teaching, and knowing. One of the courses included a short-term international study tour for nine days, and the other course focused on the study of international cultures and their approaches to learning and knowing without traveling abroad. A comparative inquiry framework was used in all four classes. This framework was comprised of a set of questions that were discussed and agreed upon by the instructor and learners to guide their learning. The inquiry framework generally posed the following questions: What is knowledge and who owns it? What is the purpose of educational research? What is the role/responsibility of the instructor of adults? What is the role/responsibility of the adult learner?

Data have been gathered from three of the four classes, with an additional class to occur in summer 2018. Data gathering methods have and will continue to consist of in-class group activity artefacts and prompted individual student reflection writings. Through qualitative, constant-comparative and thematic methods of analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), data will collectively be analyzed through initial coding leading to categorization and ultimately to

developing overarching themes. Preliminary findings indicate that learning experiences focused on the philosophy of cosmopolitanism, and collaborative comparative study across different international cultures offers meaningful learning for adult educators in developing moral, political, and cultural cosmopolitan worldviews important for adult educators today. The roundtable will discuss the specifics of methods used for teaching with the comparative inquiry framework and the nuances between adult study abroad and 'at-home' teaching strategies for cosmopolitan adult education.

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