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Globalizing Education in Times of Hyper-Nationalism, Rising Authoritarianism, and Shrinking Worldviews

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Abstract: With the global political tide pushing increasingly narrow state-framed worldviews there is a retrenchment of how people understand their relational place in, and connection to, the world. This essay argues that precisely because of the rise of hyper-nationalism (and accompanying anti-democratic trends) there is an urgent need to pursue the globalizing of public education and the coproduction of global knowledge more generally. I suggest that the emerging field of Global Studies, which has been gaining ground in the United States and even more so around the world in recent decades, offers a pedagogical pathway to promoting critical interdisciplinary perspectives and fostering equality and respect for others. My basic claim is that Global Studies shares with liberal education a core mission to promote peace in a world of cultural diversity. But in calling for epistemological pluralism – and highlighting the American (western) epistemological underpinnings of the liberal arts that are deeply implicated in colonial histories of racism, oppression and silencing of non-western knowledge – Global Studies also highlights the inherent limitations of liberal education that as a new field of inquiry it seeks to overcome.

Keywords: authoritarianism, global studies, higher education, critical pedagogy, universities, neoliberalism

Introduction

Public education – not-for-profit education provided by the state – has always been a site of political and social conflict but today it is taking a severe beating on a global scale. Not only has public education been steadily defunded for decades around the world under neoliberal economic policies and crises of austerity (Giroux 2014; Kauppi 2019), but public education is now being aggressively attacked and sometimes even considered an enemy of the state. In times of rising authoritarianism, hyper-nationalism, and anti-democratic trends

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around the world,¹ many governments are assailing educational institutions in various ways. Some governmental leaders have hurled verbal abuse at teachers calling them “losers” for supposedly indoctrinating the young with principles of inclusion and social justice (United States) (Strauss 2019). Other governments have taken more drastic measures by attacking teacher unions (Philippines), using surveillance in classrooms (China), dismantling sex-education curriculum (Canada), banning discussion of rights for women and LGBTQ communities (Brazil), closing colleges and universities (Hungary, Turkey) and throwing thousands of educators and researchers into prison, and in some cases having them killed or disappeared (Pakistan). The international Scholars at Risk organization estimates that hundreds of educators have lost their jobs and been imprisoned or killed in the past year.² According to three award-winning teachers from the Netherlands, United States, and Canada:

Throughout history, schools and teachers have always been among the first to be targeted by authoritarian regimes and extremists. Independent thinking, creativity, compassion and curiosity are threats to dogmatic beliefs and rule. Many of our colleagues in countries ravaged by war or in shackled societies teach in difficult circumstances. They are often ruthlessly persecuted and even killed for providing a well-balanced education to children, which should be a basic human right. ...Research by the United Nations has shown that the globe is spinning toward a dramatic teacher shortage, with analysts predicting a shortage of 69 million teachers by 2030. This is the crisis we should be talking about...If we can be accused of anything, it is that we are on the front line of democracy. Education reformer John Dewey famously said, “Democracy has to be born again each generation and education is its midwife.” As members of a global profession, we reject the narrowing of the mind and we stand by our colleagues defending academic freedom. We call upon parents, teachers and politicians to stand with us. Our academic freedom is what allows our democracies to remain strong. (Strauss 2019)

What we are witnessing across the world – in the global south and global north – is a systematic attack on public education. Curriculums are being revised, critical thinking is being outlawed, and religious and nationalist fundamentalisms are being imposed. This is occurring at an alarmingly accelerated rate, despite the United Nations’ efforts to promote “quality education” through the Sustainable Development Goals and the World Bank’s relatively successful efforts in supporting primary school education in literacy and

¹ As noted by the V-Dem project and the Freedom Institute, two organizations that monitor indicators of democracy, there is a dramatic upswing in autocratic governance around the world including the United States. https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/99/de/99dedd73-f8bc-484c-8b91-44ba601b6e6b/v-dem_democracy_report_2019.pdf accessed July 1, 2019.

² <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/academic-freedom-monitoring-project-index/> accessed July 1, 2019.

mathematics in developing countries. In a prevailing era of reactionary right-wing politics the very mission of public higher education as a site for academic freedom, innovative thinking, and production of new knowledge is being severely challenged on a global scale. This open attack on higher education can be interpreted as the cumulative result of decades-long market-based university reforms (Giroux 2014). As argued by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “In the past forty years, for different but convergent reasons, in various parts of the world, the university has become, rather than a solution for societal problems, an additional problem” (Santos 2016, 4).

With the global political tide pushing increasingly narrow state-framed worldviews there is a retrenchment of how people understand their relational place in, and connection to, the world. I argue that precisely because of the rise of hyper-nationalism (and accompanying anti-democratic trends) there is an urgent need to pursue the globalizing of public education and the coproduction of global knowledge more generally (Wiebke et al. 2014; Kennedy 2015). This is not the same as a calling for the global expansion of market-based western education to various non-western countries and regions (Ball 2012; Marber and Araya 2017; Mittleman 2017). Nor is it the same as teaching students “skill sets” to better prepare them for servicing the labor demands of a deregulated global political economy (Chawawa 2013). Rather, the globalizing of public education, at least in the way that I am using the term, turns on the capacity of a global imaginary (Steger 2008). It suggests that students, wherever they are situated in the world, should be encouraged to think about historical and contemporary connections across, between and within the global south and the global north. Moreover, students should be trained to appreciate that no one country can deal with the pressing challenges of our times (such as mass migrations, climate change, surveillance capitalism, and non-state conflict). Such an expansive transnational worldview is vital for peace and human survival. Relatedly, a global imaginary that values learning from and thinking through a plurality of cultures, races and ethnicities with diverse religions, languages, and social relations counters exclusionary and racist ideologies of nationalism and is essential for the peaceful coexistence of future generations.

My argument is threefold: first, the production of knowledge itself, and what gets taught at schools and universities, must be decolonized and at the same time globalized to better prepare young people to cope with the pressing global challenges of our times. Second, this could be achieved by incorporating multiple concepts, value systems, and ethical priorities emanating from different cultural perspectives and epistemological foundations in the curriculum. Third, the need for the decolonizing/globalizing of education is essential because of rising hyper-nationalism in the United States (and around the

world), and the global dominance of America's market-driven instrumental form of education (Ball 2012; Rizvi and Lingard 2009; Zajda and Henderson 2020). Together these processes are shrinking the next generation's worldviews and abilities to think and imagine outside a modernist and state-centric neoliberal framework (Darian-Smith 2017).

In what follows I first discuss what is at stake in the global attacks on public education. I then turn to a brief history of the liberal arts³ in the United States, arguing that the demise of liberal education in recent years is a portent to today's upswing in hyper-nationalism, anti-intellectualism, overt racism, and fear of people different from ourselves (Ferrall 2011; Moss 2012; Loughhead 2015). I focus on the United States because of its oversized dominance in pushing pedagogical trends on a global scale (Spring 2014; Purinton and Skaggs 2017).⁴ I do not want to generalize from the US experience since all higher education systems have characteristics reflecting unique cultural, political and economic profiles. That being said, because of America's international dominance of higher education my argument applies to similar westernized education systems beyond the US academy (Grosfoguel, Hernández, and Velasquez 2016). My argument is that with the decline of liberal education, there is an urgent need for globalizing education and fostering the global coproduction of knowledge irrespective of where one is teaching and doing research in the world. Finally, to show how globalizing education could be implemented, I turn to the emerging field of Global Studies that is in some ways a re-envisioning of liberal education but explicitly seeks to transcend its modernist framing and embedded Euro-American conceptual apparatus.

Global Studies is a new and rapidly growing undergraduate university major in the United States and in many countries around the world (Steger and Wahlrab 2017; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). Global Studies offers critical transdisciplinary curriculums that embrace the sciences and humanities, adding unique global perspectives that in very substantive ways help counter the spread of narrow-minded, state-centric, thinking (Darian-Smith and McCarty 2016). The teaching, theories and methodologies in the emerging field of Global Studies is

³ Liberal arts refers to the tradition of a general education that includes a variety of fields such as literature, philosophy, math, history, and the social and physical sciences. I use the term "liberal arts" as shorthand for a general liberal education that can be found in small liberal arts colleges as well as in large research universities predominantly in the United States.

⁴ This is a result of the United States hosting more foreign students than any other country, as well as its heavy influence in the World Bank and the WTO who are actively involved in the economization of education and promoting a US-based global culture of education (Spring 2014).

premised on fostering new forms of global imaginary and asking new kinds of questions that speak to the pressing global challenges of our times. Given the demise of the liberal arts in the United States, Global Studies presents a new pedagogical pathway to promoting critical interdisciplinary perspectives and fostering equality and respect for others. On this front Global Studies is related to programs that promote intercultural understanding, cosmopolitanism and global citizenship. But Global Studies differs from most of these efforts in its express interrogation of geopolitical power, and questioning of the universalistic assumptions of a western liberal framework and political imagination (for a notable exception see Sant et al. 2018).

My basic claim is that Global Studies shares with liberal education a core mission to promote peace in a world of cultural diversity. But in calling for epistemological pluralism – and highlighting the American (western) epistemological underpinnings of the liberal arts that are deeply implicated in colonial histories of racism, oppression and silencing of non-western knowledge – Global Studies also highlights the inherent limitations of liberal education that as a new field of inquiry it seeks to overcome.

This essay is in part driven by my desire to move beyond the important, but tired, debates justifying why a liberal education is necessary (Rouche 2010; Ferrall 2011; Zakaria 2016; Nussbaum 2016). I firmly believe, as do many others, that some form of liberal education is essential to flourishing, intellectually curious, respectful and innovative societies. A liberal education is meant to enhance a student's sense of ethical values, sense of civics and fair government, and “help human beings to live more fulfilling and meaningful lives” (Loughhead 2015, 20). Today, unfortunately, liberal education is seen – on both the right and left of the political spectrum – as no longer important. Its perceived irrelevancy has been driven by neoliberal economic logics that have been gaining ground for decades. Fueled by a utilitarian approach, education has become a commodity rather than a means to fostering inquiring young minds. In times of job market instability, for many people studying science and learning technological skills are generally regarded the more secure route to employment.⁵ Rather than decrying this market-driven approach and decline of the liberal arts, I turn to the rise of Global Studies because it provides a way for refashioning the basic principles of a liberal education that engages more appropriately with the pressing ideological and material challenges of the twenty-first century.

⁵ In the United States the extreme costs associated with tertiary education have also furthered this view.

Attacking Public Education – What is at Stake and Why Should We Care?

In the modern era there emerged a correlation between nationalism, education, and democracy. New democratic societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries viewed public education as important to shaping a national culture, and today most countries regard education as integral to maintaining a national identity and producing “ideal” citizens (Anderson 1983; Roth 2014; Zajda, Holger, and Saha 2009). Historically, public education was viewed as a public good. It supposedly ensured social equity by providing all citizens access to knowledge and the capacities to be successful citizens, as well as the ability to think independently and vote for their leaders accordingly. In short, public education was considered an institutional platform in which liberal ideas of equality could flourish and the value of inclusive and representative democracy fostered. In the history of the United States, as immigrants swelled the population throughout the nineteenth century, politicians saw public education as a means to creating productive citizens, ending crime and poverty, as well as unifying culturally diverse communities (Readings 1996).

However, the correlation between nationalism, education and democracy is not a given. You can have strong state nationalism without support for public education, and you can have a system of public education that does not endorse liberal democratic values. We see this today among right-wing national governments where public education is underfunded and under attack, and often politically demonized for providing education to “undeserving” children of the marginalized, poor and immigrant.⁶ Right-wing governments and political movements threaten the modernist alignment between education and democracy by undermining the value of inclusive and equal representation as a public good (Filippakou and Williams 2014; see also Readings 1996; Hebel 2014). So it is not surprising that in countries governed by conservative political parties and led by ultra-nationalist authoritarian leaders there is correlative decline in the promotion of democratic principles. Even in countries that are not led by authoritarian leaders, such as Germany, there is alarming evidence of surging neo-Nazi sentiment that has led to the targeting and killing of democratically elected leaders. As democracy comes under global attack, we are witnessing widespread

⁶ In the United States, standardized programs of study at primary and secondary levels is hotly contested with states such as Michigan trying to remove the words “democratic,” “climate change,” and “Roe v Wade” from the civics curriculum, and teaching about slavery, LGBTQ rights, or evolution is increasingly contested.

anti-intellectualism, denigration of facts as “fake news,” and censorship of journalists and news media. Unfortunately, public education systems that fully endorse academic freedom are one of the more obvious casualties of this global anti-democratic trend.

Why are we experiencing a wave of hyper-nationalism, authoritarianism, and anti-democratic politics? While many people may think of this as a recent phenomenon, the answer lies with processes of neoliberal globalization that have been mounting over the past half century and endorsed across the conventional left/right political spectrum. As noted by Vjay Prashad, an Indian historian and intellectual:

Globalisation has fragmented social life and has created a precarious situation where people are no longer sure how to make a living and are no longer able to live enriched social lives...The agent of globalisation – neo-liberalism – had taken over social democratic parties across the world and compromised them. (Prashad 2019)

Neoliberal economic policies have fundamentally corroded the idea that national governments should protect their citizens from capitalist exploitation and harm which was a key objective of earlier Keynesian economic policies of the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Keynesianism sought to establish a welfare state where such things as universal health care, regulated wages and working conditions, and a robust public education system could flourish. But by the 1970s and 80s neoliberal ideas had been embraced by bankers, financiers, businessmen and politicians and the welfare state came under attack particularly in Britain and the United States. Throughout the later part of the twentieth century the ideology of neoliberal globalization spread around the world and today it is hard to imagine anything outside the hegemonic economic logics of late capitalism that value profits over peoples (Slobodian 2018).

Analogous to the Gilded Age and “robber barons” in the late nineteenth century, contemporary global power resides predominantly in an elite capitalist class managing multinational corporations through a global finance sector that has effectively captured government processes to make nations and people work for them. Today’s largely unregulated market system has structurally changed societies making efforts to reinstate democratic processes very difficult. Courts and lawyers have been corrupted, projects of mass incarceration installed, and public health and public education underfunded if not dismantled. These efforts have steadily created over decades precariat working classes and gross inequalities within and between societies, causing in turn social instability, economic precarity for hundreds of millions of people, and widespread feelings of hopelessness and disenfranchisement (Stiglitz 2013; Hickel 2018).

In a belated effort to deal with the cumulative impacts of hegemonic neo-liberalism, many countries are turning inwards and trying to quell domestic problems associated with inequality, poverty, climate change and the pressures of migration. Some governments are taking a step backward and retreating into anti-globalization rhetoric, mercantile capitalism, and new nuclear arms races. Other countries are in various stages of retreating from international engagements and collaborations, justifying retreat as necessary to promoting their own national interests. The United States is a notable leader in this process, as is Britain in its retreating from the European Union. The Trump administration's withdrawal from the ground-breaking Paris Agreement on climate change signed by 195 countries, its open disparagement of the United Nations and organizations such as NATO, and its reentry into a nuclear arms race by pulling out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty of 1987 underscores the country's abandonment of international commitments to work collaboratively and multilaterally with other regions and countries of the world.

Collectively – at least at the level of national leadership – we are witnessing the collapse of a global vision of an interconnected humanity that briefly surfaced in the post WWII era (with efforts of decolonization and the establishing of a human rights regime before Cold War logics descended). And it has resurfaced periodically since with global social movements pushing for denuclearization, environmentalism, anti-apartheid, and equality such as the more recent Occupy Movement. However, in place of a widely accepted vision of interconnected humanity we are confronted today by rising numbers of national leaders condoning, if not actively participating in, racialized scapegoating, anti-immigrant rhetoric, attacks on women, minorities, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ communities and renewed incidents of anti-Semitism. Under such conditions of hate and fear, it is not surprising that many educators and scholars, who typically take a critical stance against overt political injustices and forms of discrimination, have been widely targeted and educational institutions underfunded, placed under surveillance or even closed. This is particularly the case in lower-ranked non-elite colleges and universities often serving marginalized student bodies.

The Decline of Liberal Education – What Happened?

Against a global backdrop of hostility toward public education that has been mounting for decades it is no wonder that liberal education, and liberal arts in particular, have fared badly in the United States. Historically the US education system in the post WWII era was a time of great expansion. The influx of

migrants and the rapid rise of big cities helped contribute to the demand for more schools at all levels. The explosive growth in colleges and universities was in part shaped by the mass demographic shift from east to western seaboard in search of the “American Dream,” furthered by the GI Bill (1944) that helped returning veterans purchase inexpensive homes and attend college. In California this was dramatically demonstrated by hundreds of new tract housing developments and the revamping of the University of California system in the late 1950s. Of course, this boom in public education did not extend to everyone with very few women and racial and ethnic minorities going on to higher education at the time.

At the core of the rapidly expanding higher education system was a liberal arts philosophy that was hailed as an exemplary way to train citizens to be thoughtful and innovative thinkers and possibly leaders. Liberal education was widely regarded as essential in nurturing democracy at home and abroad, and furthering the ideology that a person, irrespective of socioeconomic background, race or ethnicity could supposedly flourish and be a productive citizen. This was exemplified in President Harry Truman’s Commission on Higher Education that stated the goals of education was a “fuller realization of democracy in every phase of living,” and “directly and explicitly for international understanding and cooperation” (Commission on Higher Education 1947). Teaching a general curriculum introduced students to the great classics of literature and philosophy, as well as provided a well-rounded knowledge of politics, history, economics, art, science, mathematics and the physical sciences. According to Kara Godwin:

The U.S. is regularly regarded as liberal education’s “home” not only for its designated liberal arts colleges, but also because general education requirements (requirements that all or most students must take courses from a variety of disciplines) is common practice across the majority of public and private institutions. Compared to tertiary systems in other countries, even state institutions in the U.S. incorporate elements of a liberal education philosophy. Among other characteristics, this makes American higher education an anomaly among systems worldwide. (Godwin 2017, 88; Nussbaum 2016)

A liberal education and the progressive policies it engendered was widely hailed as reflecting America’s unique democratic society. Student-led movements in the 1960s took issue with enduring discrimination against minorities and became increasingly important for broadening higher education to include new departments within universities such as Ethnic Studies, Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Native American Studies, Asian Studies and Gender Studies. This intellectual expansion pushed for an explicit engagement with racism, postcolonialism, structural inequality and sexism and was part of the general civil rights era

that helped usher in *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), the Civil Rights Voting Act (1964) and Title IX (1972). Together the broadening of education and significant legal reforms aided breaking down – but not eliminating – school segregation and zoning policies, as well as discriminatory practices precluding college entry to women and racial, ethnic and religious minorities.

Yet at the very moment that public education seemed to be making inroads into helping build a more inclusive society it was also being politically attacked as being too “liberal.” Leading the charge was Republican Ronald Reagan, elected Governor of California in 1966 on his promise to clean up the University of California system and lower taxes on property owners that were partly funding public education.

When Reagan assumed office, he immediately set about doing exactly what he had promised. He cut state funding for higher education, laid the foundations for a shift to a tuition-based funding model, and called in the National Guard to crush student protest, which it did with unprecedented severity. But he was only able to do this because he had already successfully shifted the political debate over the meaning and purpose of public higher education in America. The first “bums” he threw off welfare were California university students. Instead of seeing the education of the state’s youth as a patriotic duty and a vital weapon in the Cold War, he cast universities as a problem in and of themselves – both an expensive welfare program and dangerously close to socialism. He even argued for the importance of tuition-based funding by suggesting that if students had to pay, they’d value their education too much to protest. (Bady and Konczal 2012)

One result of the conservative backlash against the civil rights movement was a slow and steady defunding of public education (Newfield 2008; Fischer and Stripling 2014). As part of a conservative neoliberal agenda that started in California and spread throughout the country, public education shifted from being regarded a public good benefitting society to a pay-as-you-go system benefitting individuals. President Ronald Reagan – continuing the attack on public education he had begun earlier as Governor – commissioned a report titled “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Education Reform” in 1983. The report argued that public education was failing because of lazy students and unaccountable teachers and needed to be overhauled. This heralded in a new era that sought to privatize public education through charter schools and school vouchers and blamed the inadequacies of public education as the reason for growing social inequality and poverty (Babones 2015). As government funding of public schools at all levels was reduced, tertiary level students were burdened with dramatically increasing tuition costs. Today, argues Suzanne Mettler, “The American system of higher education is in crisis. Over the past 30 years, it has gone from facilitating upward mobility to exacerbating social inequality” (Mettler 2014; see Newfield 2016). Not coincidentally, pedagogical objectives in

higher education have shifted slowly toward a narrow career-orientation and emphasis on applied skill sets that supposedly lead to jobs and enable students to pay school loans.

With the general decline in public education, support for the liberal arts also dissipated. Today, the liberal arts are openly denigrated across the political spectrum as being irrelevant and outdated, no longer the key to unlocking the American dream of well-rounded and highly successful future generations. Small liberal arts colleges have dramatically declined in numbers across the country, reflecting falling student enrollments and student interest (Wong 2018). Within larger universities, the humanities in general are experiencing decreasing student numbers and a general sense of malaise has overcome a good number of faculty. Many young people think that a humanistic-based education that promotes learning for its own sake and seems unrelated to economic goals doesn't help them to get a job and succeed in today's precariat job market. It's as simple as that – a liberal education is widely regarded as irrelevant to students' future career aspirations. This attitude is reinforced by the overwhelming emphasis placed by university administrators and national funding agencies on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), as well as the distorted popularity of economics and other “applied” programs. As vocational degrees in accountancy and nursing swell in student enrollments, degrees in history, literature and languages dwindle. Today's higher education represents a dramatic reversal of the educational mission informed by a liberal arts philosophy of the 1950s and 1960s which saw the university as a site for nurturing inquiring and innovative imaginations.

Globalizing Education and the Global Coproduction of Knowledge

My argument – as that of others – is there is a basic need to globalize education and counter growing parochialism and inequality by promoting peoples' understanding of the complex interrelated world in which we all live (Juergensmeyer 2014; Wiebke et al. 2014; Kennedy 2015; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). Taking seriously the perspectives of ethnically, racially, culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse communities and their historical genealogies is a first step in imagining new interconnected global communities. This means taking conventional nationally based curriculum beyond a modernist framework so that students can begin to understand their own societies and its cultural legacies as situated within global historical, political, economic, social and

cultural processes. Specifically, this means considering global histories of colonialism and imperialism and connecting them to a fuller understanding of contemporary mass migrations and shifting demographics that are challenging foundational myths of national cultural homogeneity. Only by globalizing education – and promoting an understanding of others that recognizes our “overlapping communities of fate” – can democracy that accommodates a more inclusive global framework be reimagined (Held 2002, 57).

Through efforts to globalizing education, I am keen to move discussion about the value of liberal education (and its correlation to the promotion of democratic values) beyond a modernist state-centered framework. Most literature on the relationship between education and democracy presents detailed analyses of national school systems and their respective histories (Noddings 2013; Newfield 2008, 2016; Nussbaum 2016; Zakaria 2016). This literature is important, but the details detract from my larger point that globalizing education is necessary whether one lives in liberal democratic systems such as in Australia, South Africa or France, or more authoritarian regimes such as those in China, Russia, Turkey, India, Philippines, Poland or Japan. I am certainly not advocating a universal one-size-fits-all curriculum since education always reflects the particularities of specific communities and cultural contexts. However, I am arguing that all education systems need to be overhauled given current geopolitical conditions that are destabilizing the global order. Just as modern nationalism ushered in new forms of social imagining in the nineteenth century that framed education as a public good within a nationalist framework (Anderson 1983), today we need new forms of social imagining that call for rethinking education within a global framework (Darian-Smith 2013, 2017; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). Put differently, Santos asks:

Given the fact that the university was part and parcel of the building of the modern nation-state – by training its elites and bureaucracy, and by providing the knowledge and ideology underlying the national project – how is the mission of the university to be refounded in a globalized world, a world in which state sovereignty is increasingly a shared sovereignty or simply a choice among different kinds of interdependence, and in which the very idea of a national project has become an obstacle to dominant conceptions of global development? (Santos 2016, 4–5)

This discussion raises another set of issues that turns on the conceptual apparatus of one’s thinking and brings into question the concept of democracy itself. Globalizing education – and the teaching of plural and interconnected histories – helps young people think about both the successes and failures of the liberal democratic project. The questioning of taken-for-granted concepts such as “democracy,” “citizen,” “justice,” “freedom” and “human rights” is essential

for pursuing new forms of global democracy that are not exclusively dependent upon liberal Enlightenment ideals that have been historically complicit in creating exclusionary divides between rights-bearing citizens and dehumanized and racialized others (see Drinkwater, Rizvi, and Edge 2019). In short, globalizing education should not affirm a modernist relationship between nationalism, education, and democracy upon which a liberal arts education was based. Rather, it should acknowledge this earlier paradigm's emancipatory aspirations as it seeks to transcend its Eurocentric limitations. It is only at this point that we can build into new curriculum the interpretative freedom and conceptual space to imagine alternative more inclusive futures (Santos 2018).

At the same time, while acknowledging liberal democracies deficiencies in providing freedom and equality for all, globalizing education should also highlight the inherent fragility of democracy as a political ideology in the twenty-first century. The idea of liberal democracy is embedded within many western countries' cultural identity and is rarely discussed or questioned in the classroom. But with right-leaning authoritarianism on the rise, there have been a significant chipping away of the hallmarks of democratic governance such as freedom of the press, transparent elections and an independent judiciary. Very disturbingly, this is occurring in the United States under the Trump administration as well as in a wide range of so-called democratic countries such as Britain, Australia, Norway, Brazil and Italy.⁷ So as much as we need an educational system that decolonizes western concepts such as "democracy," we also need a curriculum that historicizes the fragility of these concepts within global histories of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism and neoliberalism (and associated material practices of racism, slavery, war and genocide).

How would we go about concurrently decolonizing and globalizing the curriculum? Fortunately, with respect to decolonizing the Euro-American academy there have been important interventions in this regard.⁸ One of the most well known of these is the work of Paulo Freire whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in Portuguese in 1968, and first appearing in English translation in 1970, has had an enormous impact (Freire 2018). Claiming that pedagogy is always political, and that top-down education should be resisted for manipulating students and furthering colonial oppression, the book became emblematic of working-class resistance. Freire argued that effective teaching required engaged learning whereby students should be involved in a dialogue

⁷ See footnote 1.

⁸ There is a large literature on decolonizing the Euro-American academy and its theories, archives, methods and research frameworks that are beyond the scope of this essay.

with the teacher rather than being passive recipients of information. Freire's method was to teach the poor to read, thereby helping them question propaganda and demand their right to vote which in Brazil required a person being literate. To this day, the book enjoys extraordinary success and is considered a standard text for teacher-training programs in the United States, Europe and around the world. Tellingly, despite Freire having died in 1997, his advocating critical thinking and the questioning of power has made him the target of renewed attack by Jair Bolsonaro and his authoritarian government in Brazil.⁹

Another important intervention in decolonizing the curriculum is that of the feminist scholar bell hooks who wrote *Teaching to Transgress: education as the practice of freedom* in 1994. Deeply influenced by Freire and his notion of engaged pedagogy, hooks drew on her personal experiences as a poor woman of color growing up in the American south to explore the intersecting legacies of race, class and gender discrimination. She viewed teachers as catalysts for forging new sites of liberation and freedom in the classroom by encouraging students to “transgress” societal norms that institutionally and structurally oppress minorities. A central pillar of her argument was that teachers and students should work together collaboratively, learn from one another, and develop new ways to imagine hope and opportunity (hooks 1994, 2003). Both Freire and hooks were interested in using pedagogy to further critical political consciousness so that people can begin to understand the conditions of oppression and fight back accordingly.

More recently, Boaventura de Sousa Santos has reflected on the decolonizing of the westernized university in *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (2018). Significantly, what Santos adds to the earlier conversations of Freire and hooks is a global framework, making his intervention even more relevant and applicable to the current historical moment. Santos calls for “epistemologies of the South,” which have emerged in contexts of struggle, to reframe and reconstitute how and what is taught in the classroom. Building on the insights and methods of Mahatma Gandhi as well as the work of Paulo Freire and others, Santos argues for intercultural and interpolitical translations within education as a first step in building new “ecologies of knowledge” that can be mobilized in the struggles against capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. Santos points out that the context for critical pedagogy today has widened beyond that confronted by Freire and his support of workers and peasants against the Brazilian state in the 1960s. Today, the “context we are dealing with here is profoundly transnational, often having strong articulations

⁹ <https://www.spiked-online.com/2019/05/06/the-culture-war-over-brazils-leading-intellectual/> accessed July 1, 2019.

between local and global struggles, fully recognizing the diversity of the oppressed groups, and having political orientations that go far beyond the alternative of revolution versus development” (Santos 2018, 258).¹⁰

Santos calls for “new kinds of theoretical, epistemological, organization, and pedagogical orientations,” and suggests a few innovations that can be conducted in the classroom that would help nurture ecologies of knowledge. For instance, he suggests courses being cotaught by teachers with different knowledges and expertise, that oral knowledge be validated and taught on an equal basis with literature, and that books and teaching materials be coauthored by teachers of scientific and artisanal (popular or vernacular) knowledges (Santos 2018, 258, 43). Such teaching, Santos proposes, calls for a new kind of university where:

ecologies of knowledges will find a home and where academics and citizens...will collaborate in bringing together different knowledges with full respect for their difference while also looking for convergences and articulations. Their purpose is to address issues, that in spite of having no market value, are socially, politically, and culturally relevant for communities of citizens and social groups. (Santos 2018, 280)

Together the writings of scholar-activists such as Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos call for the decolonization of the Euro-American academy and taking seriously the value of non-western knowledge. Each of them demands that the classroom become a site for asking big questions, promoting dialogue, raising consciousness, fostering collaboration and nurturing respect of all cultural positions even when it is that of the oppressor or colonizer. Their collective hope is expressed well in Santos’ question: will such teaching “produce a new type of pluriversal knowledge in which artisanal knowledge will be taken seriously and in which decolonial, mestizo knowledge will emerge? (Santos 2018, 280).

The Emerging Field of Global Studies

I suggest that the emerging field of Global Studies offers an intellectual home for decolonizing/globalizing education in the Euro-American academy and in non-western education systems as well. As mentioned above, Global Studies is a fast-growing

10 More specifically, he argues that these epistemologies have emerged “in an international context marked by the contradiction between two counterpoised types of globalization: the hegemonic globalization of neoliberalism and the counterhegemonic globalization of social movements” (Santos 2018, 258).

field of inquiry in the United States and around the world. Although globalization and global phenomena have been studied for decades, Global Studies as a field developed largely in the late 1990s and has expanded exponentially since the first teaching programs were founded in Asian, European, and US universities. The Global Studies Association was established in the UK in 2000 and opened its North American branch in 2002. Over the last 20 years there has been a flourishing of stand-alone programs and research hubs in places such as Germany, Japan, China, Russia, Indonesia, Denmark, South Korea, Australia, and Britain. Alongside new Global Studies programs, there have also emerged within conventional disciplines a variety of sub-disciplinary fields engaged with global issues (e. g. global history, global literature, global sociology, and global socio-legal studies). It is now estimated that hundreds of Global Studies undergraduate programs, and at least a hundred graduate programs, have been established around the world (Steger and James 2019). In short, the field of Global Studies and its various professional manifestations have grown rapidly and there is now a burgeoning array of programs and institutional support for global scholarship in leading universities.¹¹

As a critical transdisciplinary field of inquiry there has been much debate about what is Global Studies (see Juergensmeyer 2011; Nederveen Pieterse 2013; Steger and Wahlrab 2017; Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017; Juergensmeyer, Steger, and Sassen 2018). Moving away from conventional state-based notions of international order, the field of Global Studies seeks to promote critical reflection on how the world works as an interlinked, interactive set of processes and relationships. Five key characteristics of the emerging field include (i) transnationalism, (ii) interdisciplinarity, (iii) connecting past histories to contemporary analyses, (iv) promoting postcolonial and critical perspectives that do not privilege a Eurocentric view of the world, and (v) fostering a new sense of “global citizenship” (Juergensmeyer 2011). While some Global Studies scholars are more innovative and transdisciplinary than others, all challenge conventional academic disciplines for their intellectually bounded modes of knowledge production. This is particularly the case with the relatively influential disciplines of law, economics and political science that remain

11 In the United States, Indiana University established the School of Global & International Studies in 2012; the Global Studies Department at University of California Santa Barbara launched the first doctoral program at a Tier-1 research university in 2014 followed by the University of California Irvine in 2019; the Pardee School of Global Studies was opened at Boston University in 2014; and Roberta Buffett gave a gift of over \$100 million to establish the Buffett Institute for Global Studies at Northwestern University in 2015. To my knowledge there are approximately 100 BA programs, 30 MA programs, and 3 PhD programs in Global Studies in the United States alone.

theoretically and methodologically wedded to a modernist, state-centric, and largely instrumental neoliberal worldview (Darian-Smith 2017). Global Studies programs, as their most basic formulation, seek to move beyond a state-centrist model and leave behind the field of international relations which has inadequately narrated relations of power on the global stage for decades.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Darian-Smith 2014), I am keen to support ongoing debates about what constitutes Global Studies precisely because these conversations to date have been primarily written by white male scholars from the Euro-American academy. I eagerly await contributions from scholars in the global south to discuss what they think the field represents and/or what they would like it to be. Rather than thinking of Global Studies as a new discipline, I prefer thinking of it as a dynamic field of inquiry that is constantly having to interrogate its theories, methods, and intellectual mission in connection with unfolding global processes, issues and challenges that for many of us may not yet be imaginable. For instance, in the late 1990s no one could have imagined such things as drone and cyber warfare, Russian interference in US elections (and that it would be considered acceptable by an American President), and the growing obsolescence of liberal democratic principles around the world.

Against the crackdown on public education and critical teaching by authoritarian leaders and governments, the field of Global Studies offers an important counterpoint. Specifically, Global Studies offers a transdisciplinary framework through which to develop critical pedagogies, theories and methods that help decolonize the Euro-American academy while concurrently opening students up to a global imaginary that embraces perspectives from the global south as well as the global north (on critical methodologies see Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). In the various Global Studies programs that I have been involved with components of the undergraduate curriculum include unique transdisciplinary core courses, foreign language learning, student exchange, internships and a year-long overseas field experience. At the graduate level, students are encouraged to participate in overseas programs, do overseas field research, coauthor publications with scholars from the global south, and add global south faculty to their doctoral committees. This kind of commitment to expanding conventional teaching suggests that Global Studies, more than other fields of inquiry, sees engaging plural cultures, plural value systems, and plural epistemologies as both necessary and invaluable.

Finally, Global Studies programs in the global south and global north are “homegrown” in the sense that they are developing within the cultural, social and political contexts of various countries, regions and institutions. As a result, Global Studies programs do not suffer the challenges faced by American liberal arts curriculum being transferred to non-American institutions as was

dramatically demonstrated in the Yale-NUS College collaboration (see Tan 2017; Noori 2017; Lilford 2017).¹² At the same time, Global Studies programs in the Euro-American academy seek to adapt their curriculums to accommodate non-western understandings of the world. This presents a reversal of the historical flow of knowledge production from the west to the rest that has dominated the past four hundred years. It also underscores an explicit effort to avoid the neoimperialism that taints most efforts to sell American education to overseas students (see Marber and Araya 2017).

In sum, Global Studies provides an intellectual environment through which to diversify education and support the next generation's appreciation of their place in a complex and interrelated postnationalist world. Global Studies allows students to challenge prevailing neoliberal logics of self-absorbed individualism and ask big ethical questions reflecting collective concerns about such things as rising authoritarianism, climate change, mass migrations, food insecurity, pollution, terrorism, new modes of conflict and so on. Asking big questions highlights why students see Global Studies as relevant and applicable to understanding contemporary global issues from their local perspective – be they situated in Germany, South Korea, India, Russia, South Africa, or New Zealand. As more and more students graduate each year with degrees in Global Studies there is hope that peoples' desire to think creatively, ethically and with compassion has not been entirely eviscerated by prevailing market logics and an ideology of extreme individualism.

Concluding Comments

On the eve of the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan, in June 2019, President Putin claimed that liberal ideology is now “obsolete.”¹³ In Putin's mind, liberalism,

¹² The Yale-NSU College, a collaboration that established a joint four-year undergraduate degree in 2011 between Yale and the National University of Singapore, faced serious challenges in transferring a liberal arts education to a non-American campus. Yale faced harsh criticism for its failure to condemn Singapore's laws against academic freedom, human rights, homosexuality and the freedom of assembly. As argued by Seyla Benhabib, Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Yale, “Leaving aside this venture's naïve missionary sentiment, one must ask: Do we need to go to Singapore to advance interdisciplinarity and a revival of the liberal arts?” <https://web.archive.org/web/20120817103617/http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/2012/apr/04/benhabib-whats-stake-yale-nus/> accessed July 1, 2019.

¹³ “Vladimir Putin Says Liberalism Has ‘Become Obsolete.’” Exclusive Interview with the *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/670039ec-98f3-11e9-9573-ee5cbb98ed36> accessed July 1, 2019.

which has dominated global affairs since WWII and supported decolonialism, cultural tolerance and human rights, can no longer hold against rising national populism and the forces of authoritarianism. Given the strategic alliances between Russia, China, Hungary, Italy and a number of other authoritarian states, Putin's message is extremely ominous. What is signals is that political change is occurring at a tremendous pace, amplified by the interconnected social impacts of aggressive neoliberalism, global environmental degradation, and over 70 million people on the move seeking shelter and security.

In such a rapidly unfolding world of change, globalizing education becomes a higher imperative than ever before. Fortunately, as I have tried to demonstrate, the emerging field of Global Studies offers one way to both counter shrinking worldviews and open students' imagination to thinking globally about big questions impacting us all through a critical, ethical, empathetic and more inclusive lens. Appreciating intercultural notions of democracy and justice that are not tethered to or framed by modern nation-states; experiencing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on various communities; thinking innovatively about what may constitute global governance strategies that facilitate peace and reduce conflict; learning with others in the coproduction of new kinds of scientific and vernacular knowledge – these are some of the activities Global Studies enhances.

The degree to which Global Studies programs swell in number and start appearing in most colleges and universities in the coming decade is not clear. I certainly hope that this is the case. But it will require, amongst other things, for corporatized universities to be convinced that they should invest in such a venture. I think convincing administrators that Global Studies has market-value is not an insurmountable task, particularly given the strong evidence of student interest. More profoundly, it will require a massive overcoming of the global north's assumed intellectual superiority vis-à-vis the rest of the world. The first step will be for teachers and scholars to ask themselves if they are prepared “to recognize that the understanding of the world by far exceeds the Western understanding of the world? Is the university [and faculty] prepared to refund the idea of universalism on a new, intercultural basis?” (Santos 2016, 8).

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