

International Journal of Human Rights Education

Volume 4
Issue 1 *Decolonial Human Rights and Peace
Education: Recognizing and Re-envisioning
Radical Praxes*

Article 4

2020

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Recommended Citation

Aldawood, Danielle. (2020) . "Decolonizing Approaches to Human Rights and Peace Education Higher Education Curriculum," *International Journal of Human Rights Education*, 4(1) .
Retrieved from <https://repository.usfca.edu/ijhre/vol4/iss1/4>

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Decolonizing Approaches to Human Rights and Peace Education Higher Education Curriculum

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Abstract

While the project of decolonization within higher education has become important in recent years (Kester et al., 2019), human rights and peace education specifically have undergone critique (Coysh, 2014; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013; Barreto, 2013; Zembylas, 2018; Williams, 2017; Cruz and Fontan, 2014). This critique has focused on the delegitimization of non-Western epistemologies around peace and human rights and the reliance on Eurocentric structures of thought and power within curricular and pedagogical practices (Kester et al., 2019). The decolonization of academic human rights curricula is the primary focus of this research; through interviews and content analysis with U.S. human rights professors,

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professors' curricular approaches were analyzed to understand how and to what extent they aligned with, incorporated, or utilized decolonial theory. The findings demonstrate that a decolonial curricular approach is only just emerging; these findings, which have significant implications for both human rights and peace education programs, indicate the need for further research into decolonial approaches to higher education curriculum.

Keywords: decolonization, peace education, human rights education, higher education, curriculum

Introduction

Decolonial theory, as developed by Latin American theorists including Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Walter D Mignolo, and Anibal Quijano, views colonialism as an ongoing process that did not end when colonies around the world successfully struggled for the right of self-determination. Instead, decolonial theorists contend that another form of colonialism continued – that of Eurocentric domination of culture and knowledge, ways of thinking and organizing that knowledge, which needs, creates, and reproduces hierarchies of race, gender, sex, ethnicity, and economy that result in subjugation and exploitation (De Lissovoy, 2010; Grosfoguel, 2000; Maldonado-Torres, 2011). In recent years, researchers and theorists such as Zembylas (2017, 2018), Barreto (2018), and Kester et al. (2019) have extended the critique of Eurocentric domination to human rights education (HRE) and peace education (PE). These critiques have called for the decolonization of HRE and PE: recognizing and interrogating the Eurocentric epistemologies and power structures that dominate these fields and limit new imaginaries and transformative possibilities.

Within academia, the study of HRE and PE often falls under programs such as Peace Studies, Peace and Conflict Resolution, International Human Rights, and Social Justice and Human Rights. These programs become spaces where research and theorization on human rights and peace is both disseminated and carried out. As such, the decolonization

of HRE and PE must involve decolonization of such academic programs. While the project of decolonization within higher education has become important in recent years (Kester et al., 2019), HRE and PE specifically have undergone critique (Coysh, 2014; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013; Zembylas, 2018; Williams, 2017; Cruz and Fontan, 2014). This critique has focused on the delegitimization of non-Western epistemologies around PE and HRE and the reliance on Eurocentric structures of thought and power within curricular and pedagogical practices (Kester et al., 2019).

Borne out of my experiences studying human rights and encounters with critiques of human rights, including decolonial critiques, this study contributes to the decolonization project by offering insight to decolonization efforts within higher education human rights programs and the work still to be done. This research sought to understand the extent to which calls from decolonial theorists to decolonize HRE have impacted U.S. human rights professors' curricular design and selection of teaching material. This was accomplished by examining the curricular decisions of human rights professors through content analysis of semi-structured interviews and syllabi. I utilized four key criteria of a decolonial approach to pedagogy, applicable to any of the aforementioned academic fields, to understand how and to what extent the professors' curricular decisions are aligned with, informed by, incorporate, or utilize decolonial theory. These four criteria are: educators' recognition of the absence of and need for engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies within their field; curricular consideration of which social identities are deemed authoritative and why; avoidance of a sole emphasis on hegemonic Eurocentric discourse within curricular choices; and inclusion of subaltern knowledge. Analysis of the professors' praxis and pedagogical methods revealed that a decolonial approach to curriculum is only just emerging, and there is a need to address the barriers that impede further implementation.

In this article, I discuss the relevance of these findings and implications for the advancement of HRE and PE decolonization within academia. While the studied focused on HRE programs, it has implications for other programs and disciplines in the social sciences and humanities – particularly peace studies – which have also faced critique from decolonial

theorists (Koobak and Marling, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2012; Azarmandi, 2018; Spurlin, 2001). The link between HRE and PE is rich. Betty Reardon (2009), a pre-eminent scholar of both, has argued that world peace is directly tied to the global actualization of human dignity through human rights. Though HRE and PE cannot substitute for each other, she argues that “human rights are integral to peace education” and “put flesh on the bones of the abstraction of peace and provide the details of how to bring the flesh to life” (p. 47). In turn, Michalinos Zembylas (2011) explains that the protection of human rights is a primary concern addressed by PE (p. 568). Thus, though often designated as separate fields, they intersect with inherent links between them (Hantzopoulos and Williams, 2017).

I begin by briefly discussing the decolonial critiques of human rights, peace, and their implications for PE and HRE. After sharing decolonial theorists’ criticisms, I outline the tenets of a decolonial approach to academic curriculum before delving into the research study’s methods. Finally, I present the findings and discuss their relevance for both HRE and PE before offering concluding thoughts.

Decolonial Critique of Theories of Human Rights and Human Rights Education

The decolonial critique centers colonization and coloniality as the basis for the Eurocentric liberal tradition of human rights. According to Barreto (2013), current forms of human rights result from the Eurocentric belief that the West is the fiduciary of human rights knowledge and that the Eurocentric theory of human rights is objective and universal. Eurocentric human rights discourses, policies, and processes are presumed valid and legitimate without consideration of the influence of hierarchies of power. Little room is left for contributions outside of the western liberal tradition; as such, local cultural traditions with non-Eurocentric ways of understanding human rights are often disregarded or excluded. Historical and subjugated knowledges are buried as they are considered simplistic or substandard to Eurocentric knowledge (Foucault, 2003; Coysh, 2014).

The colonization of human rights has limited its possibilities as a tool for social transformation (Coysh, 2014). This current paradigm has resulted in a lack of legitimacy of the human rights paradigm, particularly among “Third World mass populations” (Okafor & Agbakwa, 2001, as cited in Al-Daraweesh & Snauwaert, 2013). Additionally, it has led to a rights-wariness that comes from colonial approaches to human rights which fail to afford equal dignity to all traditions and perpetuate colonialist/imperialist conceptualizations of rights and justice (Baxi, 1994). Eurocentric conceptualizations of human rights that do not reflect lived experiences and the elevation of international treaties and conventions over cultural knowledge have contributed to a lack of buy-in and sense of ownership as there is little relevance to lived experiences (Zook, 2006; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013).

Construction of a non-Eurocentric theory of human rights requires epistemological decolonization of human rights. New theories and strategies of human rights can emerge when Eurocentric theories are decentered and dialogue between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric conceptualizations of human rights takes place (Barreto, 2013), allowing for an “authentic cosmopolitan consensus” on human rights (Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013, p. 392).

There is also a need to contextualize and recontextualize theories of human rights by acknowledging the historical and geographical context in which they were created. Barreto (2013) explains

Contextualising theories of human rights means showing the genealogical connection that ties the Eurocentric theory of rights to the historical setting in which it was elaborated. Unveiling the linkage to the site of emergence of knowledge weakens or destroys the legitimacy of claims to universality. [In this way,] the dominant theory is no longer ‘the’ theory of human rights; it is just ‘a’ theory born in the background of the history of Europe and, as a consequence, has no claim to be universally valid. (p. 9-10).

Contextualizing and re-contextualizing theories of human rights enables the “redrawing and re-writing the geography and history of human rights” (Barreto, 2012, p. 6) to develop “a genealogy for human rights that differs

from the usual one (Gilroy, 2010, as cited in Zembylas, 2017, p. 496), opening the door to a pluriversal¹ theory of human rights that addresses issues of effectiveness, legitimacy, and social transformation.

Critiques of human rights are similarly made in reference to HRE as projects within “schools, universities, non-governmental organizations and communities seldom question the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the Eurocentric theory of human rights” (Keet 2014, as cited in Zembylas, 2017, p. 491). There has been a failure to examine the lack of diverse epistemologies or to engage in counter-hegemonic discourses (Woldeyes and Offord, 2018). The canon of HRE, which has been dominated by human rights treaties and conventions (Woldeyes & Offord, 2018; Coysh, 2014) also faces critique. Woldeyes and Offord (2018) contend they are insufficient as a means of upholding human dignity. Moreover, Coysh (2014) contends that HRE has been overtaken by United Nations (UN)-originated discourse and much of its dissemination operationalized by the UN. The UN’s extensive involvement in the creation and dissemination of HRE discourse has allowed it to “regulate and direct how human rights [are] understood and adopted in the language and action of individuals and communities” often at the expense of subjugating particular types knowledge (p. 94). Though the field of HRE is not homogenous and variation in HRE projects and programs exists, these critiques point to the need for decolonization of HRE to extend to curriculum. Decolonizing curriculum requires engagement with different epistemologies of human rights, challenging hegemonic theories and discourse, and tools for engaging in contextualization and re-contextualization of human rights theories.

Decolonial Critique of Theories of Peace and Peace Education

Decolonial critiques of peace have, as with human rights, centered on the failure to interrogate Eurocentric assumptions about peace (Gur-

¹ Pluriversal can be understood as embracing a mosaic of epistemologies (Reiter, 2018).

Ze'ev, 2005; Zembylas, 2018). These critiques address the ways in which the “colonizing practice of the global North, the voices, contexts, and idiosyncrasies from below [have] become invisible, omitting that there can be a type of peace that emerges from the local” (Cruz and Fontan, 2014, p. 136). Coloniality has produced Eurocentric “universal” conceptions of peace that have not been problematized for their politically imperialistic and hegemonizing interests (Zakharia, 2017; Zembylas, 2018). Decolonization seeks to challenge and dismantle these hegemonic “universal” concepts of peace and the practices and pedagogies that emerge from them within PE.

Hokowhitu and Page (2011) have emphasized that these universal concepts have often promoted the idea that peace is the absence of war and violence, which is “premised on the illusion of an original peace which itself is based on the ethico-theoretical frame of Western metaphysics” (p. 17). Zembylas (2018) adds that peace is “implicated within an ongoing economy of violence in which coloniality still persists in various forms that might be invisible” (p. 12), such as the Eurocentric belief that the absence of violence equates to peace. One such hegemonic concept stems from the Eurocentric belief that there is only “one peace, one justice, one truth” (Cremin, 2016, p. 3), despite the identification of different categories of peace (Dietrich, 2012) that extend beyond the western conception of peace to those of the global east and south (Cremin, 2016). Peacebuilding is another hegemonic concept rooted in the Eurocentric theory that “democracy, capitalism, individual human rights and international law alone [are] the universal foundations of a just world peace” (Kester et al., 2019, p. 10); though important aspects of peacebuilding, they are not all-inclusive nor adequate to accomplish global peacebuilding.

The hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies of peace have silenced subaltern² epistemologies, reinforced universal conceptions of peace, and

² Spivak (1988) writes of the subaltern as “everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism” (p. 45); it is not just a “classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie” (p. 45). In this paper, “subaltern” is defined as groups of people whose voices have been silenced and do not adhere to Eurocentric and colonial epistemologies. Subaltern epistemic perspectives are knowledge coming from

limited new knowledge and practices (Cruz and Fontan, 2014). Decolonization of PE must entail not only recognition of and reflexivity about silenced epistemologies and ontologies but also their inclusion within PE. Williams (2017) asserts the need for PE to incorporate “alternative epistemologies and ontologies” and a “praxis that is iterative and reflexive” (p. 85). Likewise, Kester et al. (2019) call for the re-contextualization of the hegemonic epistemology of PE. Re-contextualization would require “redrawing and rewriting [their] geography and history” and “recognizing the historical setting within which different traditions of peace and PE have emerged outside the borders of Europe” (p. 12). Therefore, decolonization must involve “[interrogating] the Eurocentric grounding of unified or universal understandings of peace and [advancing] the project of re-contextualizing peace in the historical horizon of modernity and coloniality” (Zembylas, 2018, p. 13).

Decolonization of PE also calls for the examination of historical accounts (Byrne, Clarke, and Rahman, 2018) and the widening of global inequalities (Bajaj, 2015) that consider not only dominant power structures but absent epistemologies. Dominant Eurocentric narratives have not given adequate consideration to how coloniality has mediated global conflict and peace-making efforts (Zakharia, 2017). Scrutiny of the impact of coloniality on historical events and responses is needed in order to impede the replication of hegemonic understandings of peace. Likewise, PE must consider the interconnectedness of global inequalities and the geo-and body-politics of coloniality. Generative conceptualizations and epistemologies of peace must come from the interrogation of past failures to achieve peace in order to address the epistemicide—or “murder of knowledge” (de Santos, 2016, p. 148)—of peace. PE must engage subjugated knowledges so as to expose Other epistemologies and advance new imaginaries of peace. As a Western canon is well-established within PE (Standish, 2019), decolonization requires prioritization of engagement with

below that produces a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations involved.

subjugated knowledges, histories, and experiences with regard to decisions of pedagogy and curriculum (Zembylas, 2018; Kester, 2017).

Decolonial Approach to Curriculum

In order to disrupt the Eurocentric understanding of HRE and PE and the epistemologies that contribute to their colonization, a new decolonial approach to curriculum is required. The tenets of decolonial theory provide the criteria for a decolonial approach that aims to aid in the decolonization of HRE and PE.

For this study, I selected for analysis the writings of decolonial theorists from Latin America, as well as seminal works by other scholars on decolonial theory, to determine the tenets of decolonial theory (Tejeda and Espinoza, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2012; Richardson, 2012; Escobar, 2011, Escobar, 2004; Baxi, 2007; De Lissovoy, 2010; Sykes, 2006; Doxtater, 2004; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2006; Alcoff, 2018; Andreotti et al., 2015). Synthesis of these tenets produced four key criteria for the development of a decolonial approach within education. These criteria were operationalized and used to explore the extent to which a decolonial approach emerges within the curricular decisions of human rights professors.

The first criterion is educators' recognition of the absence of and need for engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies within their field thus avoiding approaches that enact an epistemicidal logic (de Santos, 2016). Grosfoguel (2012), Richardson (2012), and Escobar (2004, 2011) have written of the need to recognize the absence of and engage non-Eurocentric epistemologies—specific forms of knowledge that have been “othered” through Eurocentrism,³ such as traditional, folkloric, religious, and emotional forms of knowledge (Escobar, 2011)—in order to silence them.

³ The perspective and concrete mode of producing knowledge that provides a very narrow understanding of the characteristics of the global model of power which is colonial, capitalist and Eurocentered. It does not refer to the knowledge of all of Europe but to a perspective of knowledge that became hegemonic and replaced other ways of knowing (Quijano, 2000, p. 549).

They argue that colonization has resulted in the dismissal of non-Eurocentric epistemologies allowing for the continuance of an epistemicidal logic.

The second criterion is curricular consideration of which social identities are deemed authoritative and why. This criterion differs from the first as the focus centers on power relations associated with personhood, law, political and economic systems. Baxi (2007), De Lissovoy (2010), and Sykes (2006) emphasize the need for discussion regarding which social identities are given a voice and authority. They encourage critical reflection on the geo- and body-politics of those in authority and who is excluded from having authority.

The third criterion focuses on avoiding a sole emphasis on hegemonic Eurocentric discourse within curricular choices; though similar to the criterion of consideration of which identities are authoritative, the third criterion focuses on the types of materials educators use and the critiques that are included within the curriculum rather than whether power relations is a topical component of the course. Doxtater (2004), Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert (2013), and Coysh (2014) stress avoiding a sole emphasis on hegemonic discourses. They argue that discourses are often accepted without recognition of their privileging due to their origination in Eurocentric thought. Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert (2013) and Coysh (2014) have contended that HRE suffers from an over-reliance on international treaties and conventions as well as UN-originated discourse. Human rights discourse as well as UN documents are genealogically tied to a Eurocentric theory of rights (Barreto, 2012). As a result, within HRE, decolonization requires decentralization of UN documents and the inclusion of subaltern critiques.

The fourth criterion is this inclusion of subaltern knowledge, which refers to knowledge that emerges from a subaltern epistemic geo-political location . According to Escobar (2004), Grosfoguel (2006, 2007), Alcoff (2018), and Andreotti et al. (2015), hegemonic discourses require tempering and mitigation through the inclusion of discourses and knowledge that emerge from subaltern positions. Yet, care must be taken to ensure that

these discourses are not tokenized by the dominant paradigms through fastidious inclusionary procedures involving subaltern voices.

Methods

I conducted an online search of human rights programs in the U.S. to recruit participants for this study. I identified human rights programs as those offering an undergraduate major or minor in human rights, graduate programs offering a Master's degree, and law schools offering a Master of Laws (LLM) in Human Rights. This criterion identified instructors with a specialty in human rights and actively engaged in teaching the subject. I used purposive sampling, in which participants are selected according to pre-determined criteria, as well as convenience sampling, as these professors were easily contactable through e-mail addresses available on their universities' websites, and they expressed a willingness to be interviewed when contacted. E-mail recruitment resulted in interviews with twenty-two professors of the seventy-four contacted.

These twenty-two professors represent sixteen different programs out of a total of forty-seven identified through online research of higher education human rights programs in the U.S. (Aldawood, 2018). Six professors were women and sixteen were men⁴; of which, at the time of interview, eight were full Professors, five were Associate Professors, four were Assistant Professors, three were Directors, one was a Clinical Professor of Law and another a Professor of Law⁵. Interviewees included professors with graduate degrees in Political Science (4), History (1), Law (8), International Human Rights Law (1), Cultural Studies (1), Anthropology (1), Sociology (2), Social Work (1), International Studies (1), Social Science (1), Education (1), and International Relations (1). Five of the professors had under ten years of teaching experience in human rights, twelve had

⁴ Of the 74 professors identified and contacted to interview, 34 were women. However, only 6 were willing to participate in the research.

⁵ These titles were determined by reviewing the faculty page for each professor interviewed. Law titles differ from titles used in other academic departments.

between ten and twenty years of experience, and five had more than twenty years of experience. Professors came from sixteen different colleges and universities within the U.S., of which one is a private liberal arts college and fifteen are private and public universities.

I conducted twenty-two semi-structured interviews via phone and Skype from 2015 to 2017. Interview lengths varied from forty-five minutes to one-hour dependent upon the amount of information the interviewees had to share and the amount of time available. I designed the interview questions to collect data on three issues: (1) the methodology and pedagogy used in their human rights courses, (2) their educational background and how they perceived its influence on course and program development, and (3) a detailed description of their use of decolonial pedagogy in their courses. Each interview consisted of three sets of questions pertaining to the educational and professional background of the interviewee, the content of the human rights courses taught, and the pedagogy utilized in the classroom. Following the interviews, participants were asked to share sample syllabi via e-mail for later analysis and triangulation. Not all interviewees provided their syllabi. In those cases where they did not, I attempted to acquire the syllabi through the university websites. In total, I obtained at least one syllabus from thirteen of the twenty-two professors interviewed. Both interview transcripts and syllabi underwent content analysis to determine whether decolonial approaches were applied by the participants. The previously established criteria for a decolonial pedagogy were operationalized and used as coding categories for the analysis of the interviews and syllabi. I used a direct approach for both sets of data. For the interviews, the responses provided to each interview question was coded. For the syllabi, the categories were used to code the content. Specifically, I analyzed four components of each syllabus when found present: the course description, the course objectives, the required texts, and the course schedule – in particular which course materials would be required and which topics would be covered. The data provided a useful means of comparison for the self-reported description of course content and pedagogy by professors. Throughout the coding, I remained open to the development of additional codes through the analysis. Following the

coding, I compared and interpreted the data to identify the extent to which the human rights professors implemented decolonial measures in their courses. I classified the data into themes which I discuss in the findings section below.

Findings

The human rights professors interviewed for this research reflected a diverse understanding of human rights epistemology and the need for decolonial approaches to human rights discourse. Analysis of the data revealed substantial complexity to professors' engagement with decolonial approaches. Engagement with all of the four criteria of a decolonial approach was ultimately low overall: each was addressed by half or fewer of the professors. In addition, the extent to which the operationalization of each criterion was met proved inconsistent, as some professors may have operationalized one aspect but not another. These findings point to the need for further engagement with and operationalization of decolonial theory in human rights courses.

Engagement with Non-Eurocentric Epistemologies

The first criterion is the recognition of the absence of and the need for engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies, thus avoiding approaches that enact an epistemicidal logic; in other words, the process by which non-Eurocentric epistemologies have been dismissed resulting in their absence within human rights discourse. In operationalizing this criterion, I considered whether a pluriversal epistemology of human rights was presented, if the absence of non-Eurocentric epistemologies in human rights discourse was addressed, and whether the hierarchical categorization of human rights was discussed.

The research revealed that only four of the professors presented a pluriversal epistemology of human rights in their courses, and the rest either did not subscribe to this epistemology themselves or only presented a universal epistemology in their courses. The four professors who explicitly stated that they presented a pluriversal epistemology of human rights in

their courses provided explanations centered on a disbelief in any universals, the way in which the conceptualization of rights have been overtaken by some states, and a lack of global consensus. For example, Professor Kramer⁶ reasoned that human rights have not been achieved by consensus, explaining: “I engage students with literature that challenges that it is not universal...it has been co-opted skillfully by states, and therefore, has been de-radicalized and is not as critical of power as it could be” (personal communication, July 1, 2014).

Though these four professors readily and explicitly confirmed their belief in pluriversal epistemology, the majority did not. Rather they fell into one of three positions: they chose not to label their epistemology; they presented a universal and pluriversal epistemologies in their courses or emphasized neither, meaning that they either chose to present some concepts of human rights as universal and others from a pluriversal position or they did not discuss universal or pluriversal epistemologies; or they presented a solely universal epistemology of human rights. All but two of the professors believed that hierarchies exist within human rights and confirmed that they address those hierarchies in their courses. They asserted that the hierarchies embedded within human rights include personhood, knowledge production, human rights interpretation, and human rights implementation. Professor Evans provided her position explaining: it takes “vast amount of privilege to think that hierarchies don’t exist” and that these hierarchies “reflect the values of society” and create “vast amounts of human suffering and create division” (personal communication, January 31, 2017). Many others agreed that the West has been overwhelmingly influential in what is prioritized within HRE.

Authoritative Social Identities

The second criterion of a decolonial approach is consideration of which social identities are deemed authoritative. In operationalizing this

⁶ Pseudonyms are used for all professors who participated in this research.

criterion, I consider whether power relations and their impact on human rights is a course topic. This criterion differs from the first in that the focus is on power relations related not only to personhood but also political, economic, and legal systems. All of the professors interviewed assigned readings that engaged issues of power relations to some extent but varied considerably in terms of the types of power relations they addressed. I specifically asked them how patriarchy, racism, sexism, and capitalism shape human rights discourse. Some professors addressed all of these aspects of power relations while others only addressed one or two. Overwhelmingly, professors most often introduced power relations within the frameworks of sexism, patriarchy, and racism. Some professors cited ageism, classism, capitalism, neoliberalism, and colonialism as topics they addressed but much less frequently than the aforementioned. Professor Von explained that he addresses power relations all the time by talking about UN human rights conventions, which he believes easily lend themselves to discussion of patriarchy, ageism, sexism, racism, and classism.

Twelve of the professors provided syllabi that reflected the inclusion of at least one reading addressing power relations. Also noteworthy is that although decolonial theory emphasizes the ways in which hierarchies of race, class, and gender have been maintained through the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), even in modern liberal societies, neoliberalism and colonialism were each addressed by just one professor. The absence of these topics perhaps reveals a disconnect between why the hierarchies of race, class, and gender exist; the extent to which they are embedded in other ideologies, like neoliberalism, colonialism, and coloniality; and how they are perpetuated. Their absence also implies that even within discussion of power relations, there is a de facto hierarchy reaffirming the impact of coloniality and the need for decolonization.

Additionally, of significance were the explanations that some professors gave for why they do not thoroughly discuss power relations. Both lack of time and the survey nature of their courses were factors, as was the understanding that power relations would be thoroughly addressed in other courses required in their human rights program. Professor Upton suggested that the incorporation of power relations “is somewhat limited by

the fact that it's a survey course." She explained: "My ability to drill down on any one of these issues is limited because we only do a day on whatever issue...but I do try to bring it out where I can" (personal communication, May 17, 2014). Professor Peterson highlighted the importance of including the topic of power relations in her department but explained that she relies on other courses to address particular power relation frameworks. Time constraints and a desire to avoid repetitiveness are common challenges in any course, yet is important to avoid an "add and mix" pedagogy in which some aspects of a theory are integrated but the pedagogy is not grounded in that theory. In the case of decolonial pedagogy, an "add and mix" approach is not ideal. In order to achieve a truly decolonial pedagogical approach, decolonization needs to be the underlying theme that influences all other pedagogical choices.

The effort made by all the professors to address how power relations impact human rights, albeit to different degrees, supports the aim of a decolonial approach; however, given the significance of this issue to decolonial theory, more purposeful incorporation of the impact of hierarchical power relations on human rights would facilitate further decolonization. Power relations are important to decolonization because the hierarchies established through them result in "situated" epistemologies that are Eurocentric but positioned as uncontested and universal (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2009). Thorough discussion of the impact of power relations on human rights is necessary; without it, we cannot begin to understand the extent to which voices have been silenced or construct a non-Eurocentric theory of human rights (Barreto, 2013).

Avoiding Eurocentric Discourses

The third criterion of a decolonial approach is avoidance of a sole emphasis on hegemonic Eurocentric discourses. Though similar to the second criterion, this criterion focused on the types of materials and critiques that are included rather than whether power relations is a topical component of the course. For this, I considered the extent to which the course materials were centered on documents created by the United

Nations and whether critiques of the human rights framework were included as course topics and materials.

Analysis of syllabi and interviews demonstrated that the content in many courses was either focused on UN documents or incorporated them extensively. Thirteen professors attested that these documents were a significant component of their course material citing the importance of these documents as the foundation of the international human rights system and the necessity of embedding them in their courses. For Professor Upton, for example, the inclusion of these documents stems from a desire for students to be knowledgeable about international law topics:

I cover the fundamentals. I want them to know some basic things like the fact that the UDHR isn't a treaty. I want them in some way to be intelligent consumers of news about international law. To be [intelligent consumers of news], they do need to know some of those fundamentals. (personal communication, May 17, 2014)

Several professors connected their inclusion of these documents to their objective of encouraging students to critically consider them. For example, Professor Peterson explained that she asks her students to critically examine human rights treaties and instruments in her classes:

We look at the limits of the human rights instruments, what they can accomplish, and what they can't do. So, I think we don't have this perspective that it's all about the treaties, that it's all magical, at all. So, we critique the framework and practice. (personal communication, May 4, 2015)

Only two professors stated they do not specifically teach or use UN documents in their courses much, if at all. Professor Faber, a law and political science professor, refrains from incorporating many UN documents explaining, "I don't use them much anymore because I reached the conclusion that ... with the treaties, there is not a lot of ground for the serious analytical work I do" (personal communication, February 6, 2017).

The professors took varied approaches to the incorporation and use of UN documents; as the foundation of the legal framework for human rights these documents are important; however, from a decolonial perspective, they should not be central to HRE. Instead, when presented,

they should be accompanied by course materials from non-Eurocentric and subaltern epistemologies or offer critiques.

The majority of the participating professors did bring critiques into their courses. Professor Faber explained his inclusion of critiques was rooted in consequences of exclusion:

Students will go off in the world of human rights and will frequently end up simply adopting relatively passively a variety of attitudes and conclusions about what human rights does and doesn't include, or how much pluralism can be tolerated in the system without ever really thinking through the problem. They take for granted certain answers that are not obvious. And I think that the second problem, which derives from the first, is that you often end up seeing what from the perspective from other parts of the world could be described loosely as imperialistic attitudes about human rights on the part of relatively wealthy privileged western elites without even an awareness that what they're asserting, in fact, may be sort of quite contentious and particular and not as universal as they assume it is (personal communication, February 6, 2017)

Critiques varied in number and type, but cultural relativism and feminism were cited most often by eight and seven professors, respectively. Other critiques cited by more than one professor included postcolonial, liberal imperial, and religious (Islamic) critiques. Critiques of colonialism were noticeably absent. Only four professors included a postcolonial critique and no professors explicitly mentioned including a decolonial critique. Although the inclusion of other critiques from subaltern spaces is important to decolonization, the absence of critique that specifically underscores the impact of coloniality and the subsequent marginalization of non-Eurocentric voices reveals space for the development of new approaches and implemented for curricular and pedagogical creativity.

Inclusion of Subaltern Knowledge

The final criterion of a decolonial approach is the inclusion of subaltern knowledge. Though subaltern knowledge does not assume a

critique, it is unclear how knowledge is subaltern without the inclusion of critique. Yet, subaltern knowledge is not simply critical knowledge or non-European knowledge; rather, it refers to knowledge that emerges from a subaltern epistemic geo-political location. However, this is not to say that anyone situated within a subaltern epistemic location will reflect *a priori* that location within their thinking much less thinking *from* a subaltern epistemic location. Grosfoguel (2008) clarifies, “Subaltern epistemic perspectives are knowledge coming from below that produces a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations involved” (para. 4). Likewise, it is not necessary that knowledge epistemically located must also be socially geopolitically located in subaltern power relations.

In operationalizing this criterion, I considered whether course materials by authors concerned with subaltern perspectives, such as Mignolo, Fanon, de Sousa Santos, Guha, Prashad, Mohanty and Césaire, or other subaltern voices, such as direct testimonies, are included in the course materials. To expose how Eurocentric epistemologies subjugate marginalized voices, decolonial theory proposes the inclusion of subalternized, non-Eurocentric epistemologies from different geopolitical contexts in HRE (Escobar, 2004). This inclusion allows subaltern epistemic projects to emerge and dialogue with the Eurocentric project thereby revealing the exclusionary hierarchy of knowledge. Overall, of the twenty-two professors, nineteen were able to cite or their syllabi incorporated at least one course material representative of Grosfoguel’s delineation of subaltern perspectives on human rights.

Similar to the data regarding the incorporation of issues related to power relations and critiques to their courses, twelve professors did include three or more of these course materials while eight included more than five representing a subaltern perspective. The course materials were wide ranging, and there was no overlap among them with the exception of Makau wa Mutua’s 2001 article “Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights,” which was incorporated into courses by six of the professors. Mutua’s article and has seemingly become, based on its inclusion in so many of professors’ courses, a very popular text representative of a critique of human rights. Furthermore, some professors

indicated that they showed videos and had guest speakers come to their courses that presented a subaltern epistemology.

Even though the course materials used by professors demonstrated contributions to human rights from outside the Western or liberal tradition, not all of the authors represent a subaltern voice. Rather, some of the authors write about subaltern experiences or epistemology though it is not their personal experience. Decolonization does not require that subaltern epistemology is only presented by subaltern voices, however, as Heleta (2016) notes, these non-subaltern voices “cannot be seen as the all-knowing and all-important canon upon which the human knowledge rests and through which white and Western domination is maintained” (para. 23). In addition, consideration of the locus of enunciation is relevant (Grosfoguel, 2006) as people “always speak from a particular location within power structures” (Grosfoguel, 2008, para. 4). One’s epistemic location is situated by their ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation but also “the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks” (para. 4). We must consider that the knowledge that emerges from a person not situated within a subaltern epistemic location is different than the knowledge that emerges from a person who is situated within such a location. Yet, again, subaltern knowledge is located in subaltern power relations and critically approaches hegemonic knowledge and power relations involved in its dominance. This point is significant for both what is included in a syllabus and the pedagogical approach to engaging material.

Human rights educators must be very cautious when choosing course materials to represent the subaltern perspective, and whenever possible, subaltern voices should speak for themselves as there can be a significant challenge to finding international human rights textbooks that present non-Western ways of understanding human rights. For professors who opt to use textbooks rather than books, articles, or other materials in their courses, there are few textbooks that take a decolonial approach (Aldawood, 2018). When asked, many professors agreed that finding textbooks that present critiques or non-Western epistemologies was difficult as most textbooks present mainstream views representing the western, liberal tradition or are written by Westerners who are not

competent to incorporate subaltern epistemologies as they lack training in them. Professor Anderson confirmed that the “canons reflect academia as a whole...other voices aren’t being recognized in academia as a whole” (personal communication, November 21, 2016). Professor Jackson offered an explanation as to why:

There is an assumption that non-Western societies have no concepts of human rights, and there is therefore no need to examine their ideas...Sometimes, it is also due to ignorance and the unwillingness to understand what other societies offer. (personal communication, February 6, 2017)

Despite the Eurocentric canon of human rights, the majority of professors incorporated some subaltern perspectives. Eight professors included more than five course materials representing a subaltern perspective while four included at least three and seven incorporated one. Even so, many of the other materials professors incorporated into their curriculum were not representative of a decolonial approach as they did not present or originate from subaltern epistemologies of human rights or provide critiques of the human rights framework. Human rights professors who value a decolonial approach face difficulties and must carefully examine and evaluate the materials they choose for their courses. Limiting course materials to the traditional canon of textbooks representing Eurocentric perspectives can itself be understood as a colonial practice. The inclusion of decolonial materials, meanwhile, can help contextualize the genealogical push for decolonization. Readings that are decolonial, even if incorporated in a limited manner, are still able to move beyond the ‘Othering’ narrative as their incorporation separates knowledge from its embeddedness in the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2009).

Summary of Findings

The majority of the professors recognized the existence of hierarchies within human rights knowledge, discussed the impact of power relations on human rights discourse, and included some critiques of human rights in their courses. Significantly fewer presented human rights

epistemology from a pluriversal perspective in their courses. Similarly, few decentered hegemonic Eurocentric discourse by limiting UN human rights documents, such as treaties, conventions, and case law, or incorporating a significant number of works by subaltern authors or theorists in their courses. Thus, the research suggests a minority of the professors' pedagogies reflects a decolonial approach though some criteria was present within their pedagogies. Work toward decolonization must continue; adoption of a decolonial pedagogical approach is part of the complex process of decoloniality and the decolonization of human rights. Continued implementation of pedagogical approaches that reify Eurocentric epistemologies of human rights limits the possibility of creating conditions in which a pluriversal epistemology can emerge.

Discussion

Educational spaces are not neutral and are rooted in Eurocentric ideology; they contain “all kinds of explicit, implicit, and hidden curricula imparting what ‘to know’ but also, ‘how to learn’ and ‘why’” (Standish, 2019, p. 124). Without concerted effort and attention to pedagogy and curriculum, coloniality will continue to detrimentally shape education. Disruption of teaching practices and curriculum is necessary in order to avoid the reproduction of colonial power structures and the continued silencing of non-Eurocentric epistemologies (McLeod et al., 2020).

Though HRE and PE are distinct fields of study, they are strongly linked. PE is viewed as a part of HRE and vice versa (Page, 2008; Reardon, 2009). Education about and for human rights and peace runs the risk of perpetuating the problems they are trying to solve if Eurocentric paradigms and pedagogy are not questioned. Their interconnectedness requires the decolonization of both in order to meet the goals of each. Calls for HRE (Barreto, 2013; Baxi, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Mutua, 2002; Zembylas, 2017, 2018) and PE (Standish, 2019; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013; Cremin, 2016; Kester et al., 2019) to undergo decolonization stem from similar claims pertaining to the lack of pluriversal epistemologies and the hegemony of Eurocentric frameworks and discourse surrounding peace and human rights.

Though this study focused on HRE, the conclusions drawn offer some insights and considerations for the decolonization of both fields. Further decolonization within the discourses, frameworks, and canons to one of these fields is likely to result in reverberations within the other due to their interconnectedness. Implementing a decolonial approach is possible. The conditions of possibility can be created if professors begin by asking questions such as: Am I willing to closely examine my own beliefs and praxis? Expend the time and energy a decolonial approach will require? Take the risk involved in altering the epistemology I present in my courses? In answering these questions, professors become more aware of the difficulties they may face as they work toward decolonizing their own pedagogy.

The western/Eurocentric canon of PE and HRE (Barreto, 2013; Standish, 2019; Kester et al., 2019) that often serves as the basis for curriculum within these fields will not be replaced without the consistent, concerted effort of the professors within both fields. The interconnectedness of PE and HRE and the similarity in decolonial critique reveals the impact that changes within the discourse, framework, and canon would have on the other. The fulfillment of the goals of HRE and PE is dependent upon the decolonization of both. As professors in both fields push toward decolonization, some of the barriers to pedagogical and curricular change will slowly reduce opening the possibilities for greater implementation of decolonial approaches.

As we strive for decolonization, we must remain cognizant that it is a process of political struggle - an ongoing process related to the process of learning in that it takes time. This political struggle has been documented over time through the writings of such theorists and thinkers as Fanon, Césaire, Freire, and Spivak. There have been moments of breakthrough and of watershed insights, but the process is complex, contested, and often contradictory. In other words, the line between the colonial and the decolonial, the line named 'coloniality' (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2009, 2011), arguably should not reproduce a binary. A decolonial approach to HRE or PE does not mean that canonical texts and ideas are ignored, but that the process of canonization is interrogated; it is not about reproducing a binary,

but understanding the relationships that are layered and scaled. This understanding has already been demonstrated through the work accomplished by those who have pushed for anti- and de-colonial possibilities not only in HRE and PE but other programs in the humanities and social sciences. The decolonial reminds us that binaries do not come from below, only from above. While the decolonial represents differences, the willingness to engage those differences, and for difference to be the basis of agreement, the colonial comes from above with the intention of annihilation of differences, power, and control. The relationship between the colonial and the decolonial produces a space, a third space (Sandoval, 2000), in which dialogue can emerge about curriculum and methodology.

Conclusion

Decolonial theory offers a strong critique of HRE and PE that examines the ways in which Eurocentrism, sustained through colonialism and coloniality, has resulted in an epistemology that ignores and excludes subaltern voices. Both HRE and PE face important consequences as a result, which can only be addressed through decolonization. The implementation of decolonial curricular approaches to HRE and PE is valuable to the process of decolonization. This approach requires a shift away from Eurocentric discourses and authoritative social identities and toward the inclusion of subaltern knowledge and engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies. The tenable link between PE and HRE requires recognition that both must undergo decolonization; one cannot be fully decolonized without the other. This reality then requires those who believe in the need to decolonize these fields to work together.

The findings of this research revealed that a decolonial approach is only just emerging within the field of HRE teaching. Though the tenets of decolonial theory have resonated with many of the professors interviewed, the curricular decisions in their courses have not reflected a fully decolonial approach. Likewise, within PE, some academics have embraced and implemented decolonial approaches (Standish, 2019), but coloniality's grip remains intact (Cremin, 2016; Kester et al., 2019; Zembylas and Bekerman,

2013). Moving forward, there is a need to extend this research to peace studies programs to examine if similar patterns emerge. Moreover, research should focus on examining the pedagogical and curricular choices of PE professors as well as further investigate the pedagogy of HRE professors and the impact of decolonial approaches on students' epistemologies.

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