

Editorial Introduction

Teaching about Terror: 9/11: Policy, Pedagogy, and Curricula

Ayaz Naseem, Concordia University
Adeela Arshad-Ayaz, Concordia University
Cheryl Lynn Duckworth, Nova Southeastern University
Michelle Savard, Concordia University

For many around the world, the attacks on 9/11 resulted in shock, grief, and trauma. Certainly it has dominated US national, as well as arguably global, politics since that day. After 9/11, countries like Spain and the UK experienced their own devastations in Madrid and London. Indonesia and Saudi Arabia were attacked, and inevitably, Pakistan, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, Syria and other countries have experienced frequent violence attributed to extremist elements and franchises.

Fifteen years on, notions such as extremism, terrorism, and radicalization have become a part of the everyday parlance of citizens, governments, media, and NGOs/Community Based Organizations (CBOs) among others. In the definitional realm, these notions remain contentious. Despite the controversial nature of these notions, they have generally come to be synonymous with Islamic radicalism, terrorism, and extremism. The narratives built around these notions normalize them as associated with certain people, a particular religion, and specific cultures and histories. The normalized articulations are then inscribed on the bodies, dresses, behaviors, and beliefs of a vast number of people such that they reverberate with any and all acts of radicalization, extremism, and terrorism. Those associated with the exteriorized regions, religions and cultures consequently are pushed to the margins. Exteriority, conceptually, is an extreme form of marginalization as it manifests at multiple layers of the social ecology. The exteriorized are those outside social boundaries who are excluded from possessing basic rights, protection or resources (Hall, 2004). The exteriorized are considered “non-human” or as described by Fanon as “the wretched of the earth”. These “others” are often either invisible, considered expendable, or are demonized when they come to the attention of those in the inner circle. Their voices are not likely to be heard as they are not comprehended by the ears of the fearful. Since 9/11, the West has defined extremism, and designated complete cultural groups as terrorists but more recently we learn that now the exteriorized are found both inside and outside the societal center. They are rumored to be “living among us” which creates a conceptual change to the notion of living beyond the margins. The circle is now conceived as having within it “dangerous others” (Hall, 2004) thus providing the fuel for fear and mistrust.

Since 9/11, issues related to extremism, terror and trauma have been studied from many perspectives. A majority of research is grounded in psychology, national security, and law and order paradigms. Articulations from these perspectives result in three disturbing tendencies: First, they foreclose the space in which contestations over meaning, meaning-making, and understanding these acts and their underlying causes can take place. Second,

they lead to marginalization and disenfranchisement of a large number of people from political and social realms at the societal as well as global contexts. Thirdly, they obscure the interconnectedness of various physical, symbolic, and discursive factors that result in radical and extreme behavior patterns.

Not much attention has been rendered to study these issues from the field of education. Much literature in the fields of peace education speaks to the role of narrative and narrative violence in escalating and entrenched conflicts (Cobb, 2013). The mono-focus, normalized meaning-making cannot de-escalate, much less transform, without addressing the contested narratives around extremism and terrorism. Schools are a primary shaper of human identity (Davies 2008; McGlynn, Zemblyas, Bekerman, & Gallagher, 2009; Duckworth, 2012; Naseem, 2010). The narrative, which students are internalizing about extremism and terror must be interrupted and understood in its wider context (and ramifications) if we are to begin transforming this conflict. Interrupting normalized understanding of extremism and terrorism has the potential to drive home the urgency of knowing how the narratives of extremism and terror are understood in educational environments throughout the world. The narrative today's students inherit will do much to shape the security and well-being of the citizens of the world. There is neither one form of extremism nor one source of it. Extremism is produced, exists, and is reproduced on almost all levels of the world that we live in. From systemic extremism inherent in and intrinsic to the predatory neoliberal economic order, to the more overtly political and religious extremism that results from the political and religious ideologies of the "right" or the extremism of violent global misogyny, it is imperative that today's students be invited to dialogue on and investigate all forms of extremism(s) which may impact their well-being and human potential (Naseem & Arshad-Ayaz, this volume). There is, thus, a dire need for opening an educational space that can help educators and students focus on multiple causal factors that foster radical and extreme behavior. Such an educational space can disrupt the narrow contemporary articulation and understanding of extremism and help educators and students get a holistic knowledge of the context, discursive constitution, and interlinkages between various forms of extremism that feed on each other.

As educators, we know that methodology and pedagogy are key to building a global culture of peace and to communities enjoying economic well-being and safety. Too often, the rich potential of education is overlooked in debates around security and countering violent extremism (CVE), discourses which have real insights to contribute but which also can reproduce some of the troubling narrative dynamics elaborated above. Thus this special edition not only raises key questions regarding the terms of the debate, it also endeavors to outline policy, classroom-based and community-based solutions from a humanistic and peace-building perspective. Authors herein stress, for example, the need for classrooms to be both spaces for critical thinking as well as safe for all students. Issue articles similarly emphasize experiential engagement, dialogue and critical media literacy for 21st century students.

Contributions to this special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* emanate from multiple epistemic positions, and focus on diverse geographical, societal,
Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education, 2016, 11(1), pp. 1-5
ISSN 1718-4770 © 2016 University of Alberta/Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Research
<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/JCIE>

and educational contexts in exploring the following questions in Canadian and international perspectives:

1. How does education in general and teachers in each country in particular address the teaching about extremism, terror, and trauma—if at all?
2. What are the relevant intellectual contexts and practices in which extremism, terror, and trauma can be addressed in educational contexts?
3. What are the peace and conflict implications of how extremism, terror, and trauma are addressed in educational systems/discourses?

In the first article, *What Kind of Pedagogy Do We Need to Address Extremism, Terror, and Trauma?* Naseem and Arshad-Ayaz examine the veracity of the modern usage of “extremism” to broaden the understanding of this phenomenon and relatedly also open up the space in which solutions to extremism can be found. Understanding contemporary extremism as a crisis in education, they propose a critical counter extremism pedagogy that can make visible vital connections between extremism and the wider interlinked political, economic, social, and cultural processes at the global level.

In the second article, *Educational, Epistemological and Methodological Considerations on Multicultural and Peace Education*, Bekerman scrutinizes foundational issues related to present practice and research in the field of multicultural and peace education. Bekerman forcefully argues for the insufficiency of the contributions that psychological perspectives offer to the development of pedagogies that aim at ameliorating intergroup hostilities. He advocates for the need to approach critically the concepts of political organization of the nation-state, culture, multiculturalism, self and identity, to augment the outcomes of intergroup education, the strategies that may improve it, and its research.

The third and the fourth articles in this special issue turn attention to representational aspects that originate from normalized mono-focus articulations of extremism advanced by the national security state discourse. Yasmin Jiwni and Mathew Dessner, in their contribution, *Barbarians in/of the Land: Representations of Muslim Youth in the Canadian Press*, examine print media representations of Muslim Youth in Canada. Working with 158 news stories published over a period of four years in *The Globe and Mail*, a major Canadian newspaper, they trace the ways in which Muslim youth are represented in Canadian print media. Using postcolonial and critical race lenses, they inspect the cartography of these representations to demonstrate the ways in which a racial logic inscribes these depictions such that they resonate with contemporary global phenomena. They demonstrate that the print media portrayals produce a flattering image of the Canadian nation as benevolent and dedicated to universal standards of justice on the one hand, whereas Muslim youth on the other hand are cast not only as an enemy within the nation state but also as a contaminating force that must be disciplined or ejected from the body politic.

Michelle Savard’s article, entitled *Addressing Islamophobia Creatively in the Classroom*, puts forward pedagogical strategies through which Islamophobia resulting from the hegemonic national security state discourses can be deconstructed in educational

environments. In her article, she explores how othering takes place in relation to the country/origin of the people and how in the shape of Islamophobia manifests itself in the form of hate speech and hate crimes. She makes a forceful argument that a significant consequence of Islamophobia resulting from electronic media representations of people of the Middle Eastern backgrounds is visible in the curtailment of fundamental human rights. She concludes by suggesting some pedagogical approaches to enhance critical media skills and to encourage students to stand up against this pervasive racism.

In the fifth article, *Young people's response to The Response: The impact of political diversity and media framing on discussions of combatant tribunals*, Jeremy Stoddard and Jason Chen examine the implications of the use of media texts as pedagogical tools for secondary and post-secondary students in the context of political polarization in the U.S. society on issues related to extremism and the war on terror. They report results of a study with four groups of 18-22-year-old participants selected on the basis of their political views, engagement, and efficacy (liberal, conservative, and two mixed groups), which were asked to view and discuss the issue of combatant status review tribunals presented in the film *The Response*. Their research results demonstrate that political polarization in the U.S. is an important factor in how media texts are consumed. They demonstrate that while the groups with a mix of liberal and conservative political commitments had “higher quality” discussions and a “better understanding of the issues post-discussion- in particular the tradeoffs of national security versus individual rights” those with conservative views further reified that conservative position on the issue.

In the penultimate article of the special issue, *Gaza City: A Profound Personal Journey*, Norm Dean presents his autoethnographic observations from an educational journey to Gaza. Through his experiences during two separate trips to Gaza, he recounts the passion and commitment of teachers and students working under extremely trying circumstances, “challenging facilities, with minimal resources, amid the constant threat of danger.” Through a highly personal and evocative narrative, Dean drives home the point “how teacher commitment and dedication, matched by a strong student desire to learn can create truly inspiring learning communities.” He concludes that school culture in a hostile environment is central to the emergence and perpetuation of hope and aspirations for the people living in/through adverse situations of conflict.

In the final article, *Is there a school to terror pipeline? The case of France*, Cheryl Lynn Duckworth observes that in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in January 2015, much of the media attention focused on the economic, identity and cultural issues, which could be behind the radicalization of Muslim youth in France. However, the media did not delve into the details of their educational backgrounds and circumstances. She then explores the question of “whether there is a ‘school to terror’ pipeline—that is, is there anything about the pedagogy, curriculum, school culture or educational policies of France which might well be contributing to the radicalization of young people?” Duckworth positions epistemic hybridity as a desired pedagogical outcome, noting that extremisms of all kinds tend to emerge from epistemic, and thus, narrative narrowness and rigidity. She concludes with considering of how education could be used as a safe space, how young people in France might be repositioned narratively not as the problem but rather as

the solution, and how this could contribute to conflict transformation at community, societal and global levels.

References

- Cobb, S. (2013). *Speaking of violence: The politics and poetics of narrative in conflict resolution*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199826209.001.0001>
- Davies, L. (2008). *Educating against extremism*. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11159-008-9126-8>
- Duckworth, C. (2012). "Growing a Gandhi: Critical Peace Education, Conflict Transformation and the Scholarship of Engagement" in Duckworth and Kelley, eds. *Conflict Resolution and the Scholarship of Engagement*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: New Castle upon Tyne, UK. pp. 50-71.
- Hall, J. (2004). Marginalization and symbolic violence in a world of differences: War and parallels to nursing practice. *Nursing Philosophy*, 5, 41–53.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1466-769X.2004.00165.x>
- McGlynn, C., Zemblyas, M., Bekerman, Z., & Gallagher, T. (2009). *Peace education in conflict and post-conflict societies*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230620421>
- Naseem, M. A. (2010). *Education and gendered citizenship in Pakistan*. New York: Palgrave-McMillan. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230117914>