Introduction

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This Spring 2014 issue features five essays from a variety of different disciplines, five review essays, and 14 book reviews on globalization topics (defined broadly), a predominant theme of the journal. The lead essay by Conerly Casey is a very important topic in light of the recent news reports coming out of Nigeria regarding the violence perpetrated by the group Boko Haram. Based on eight years of ethnographic research among doctors and healers in religiously diverse communities of Wahhabi, Salafi, Sufi, and other Islamic and non-Islamic orientations in northern Nigeria including interviews with young people who had experienced and participated in various forms of violence, Casey amassed a rich collection of data. She indicates that Muslim youth gangs that participate in movements to enforce *shari’a* criminal codes in northern Nigeria have hunting and warrior traditions that influence their behavior. These youth face high rates of inflation and political instability. Frequently, they are mobilized by political and religious leaders to participate in movements framed as “ethnic,” “religious,” or “regional” conflicts, and to steal or traffic drugs, women and arms. Casey traces the development of various Islamic movements in Nigeria with its splintering factions and sectarian developments. She indicates that the Boko Haram group needs to be understood within this context of these movements and the various Muslim youth gangs. Although Casey does not justify the violence perpetuated by Boko Haram and related developments, she argues that international and national neoliberal policies and government sponsored violence directed at them has led to more recruits into this terrorist organization.

The second essay by Krishna Bista and Amany Saleh is based on a study of 305 graduate students who were members of research organizations (the American Educational Research Association Graduate Studies (AERA-GS) and the Forum for Education Abroad Professionals) and the alumni of a doctoral program in educational leadership at a Southern university that surveyed their attitudes on global education and its importance in the U.S. This has been an issue that has fostered an enormous amount of debate within U.S. higher education. Noting how global education movements have developed in Europe and other areas of the world, Bista and Saleh discuss how global education initiatives in the form of study abroad programs, international research opportunities, exchange programs, and international student programs have emerged in the U.S. as increasing immigrant populations, diverse student communities, and threatening world events (such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks) have highlighted the need for these programs. The authors indicate that despite these initiatives, some U.S. educators still do not see the relevance of global education. They discuss how within studies of global competence, educators report a limited appreciation for international cultures and low levels of intercultural exchange and a lack global knowledge, attitudes, and skills for global competence compared to students from other parts of the world. In their study of the graduate and alumni perceptions of the importance of global education, Krishna and Saleh found that some participants shared their frustration with respect to the lack of global education programs and the respondents surveyed
agreed on the positive benefits of global education, and they reported a need for graduate programs in global education. They also acknowledged that global education is important in the 21st century to connect the local and global. This empirical study has contributed to this vital debate about global education in the U.S.

Another essay by Fay Patel, Mingsheng Li, and Matthew Piscioneri deals with the engagement of global and international education from the perspective of Australian higher education. In a review of different Australian university websites, the authors found that all of them mentioned global engagement, but there appeared to be a lack of evidence that anything had actually been implemented regarding the internationalization of education. With the recognition of the ‘Asian Century’ and the rise of China and India and other Asian economies, Australian higher education began to re-prioritize their mission for educating and developing students with a global perspective. Yet, the visions and goals in global engagement to promote collaborative research and development opportunities with global partners were not institutionalized nor funded within the academic programs and student services at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The authors maintain that by simply “sprinkling in” some international perspectives to courses is not akin to authentic incorporation of global themes and perspectives. The authors argue for a more inclusive global curriculum that challenges the hegemonic power of the prevalent mono-cultural ‘Anglo-centric model of teaching pedagogy in Australia, which unreflectively promotes ethnocentric views that reinforces the existing cultural norms, conventions, established norms and practices, ignores the richness of cultural diversity and prevents the emergence of a dynamic and transformative internationalized curriculum. This essay helps foster the dialogue regarding the implementation of truly global and international perspective within the Australian university environment and beyond.

The fourth essay by Ismael Vaccaro investigates the implications of neoliberal economics for the Spanish economy and the creation of ‘uncertainty.’ He analyzes the role of what he suggests as the ‘socially constructed’ uncertainty within the recent generalized economic crisis in Spain and Europe. Vaccaro argues that the role of this constructed ‘uncertainty’ and ‘crisis’ as an element of global capitalism has resulted in excessive inequality and poverty in Spain. The current climate of uncertainty and crisis tends to fuel austerity policies that lead to more anxiety for workers in Spain and some other European countries. The characteristics of hypermobile modernity and the Fordist form of late capitalism led to unemployment rates tripling to 26 percent in Spain from 2008 to 2013 followed by severe labor reforms that reduced unemployment benefits and the costs of layoffs, coupled with frozen retiree pensions, resulting in an enormous amount of people living below the poverty line. Throughout his analysis of hypermodernity in Spain and other countries of Europe, Vaccaro highlights the corrosive and destructive aspects of neoliberal capitalist policies that lead to structural unemployment, rising inequalities, and poverty.

The fifth essay by Hany Besada and Evren Tok investigates South Africa and its participation into what has been internationally recognized as the BRICS, the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. President Jacob Zuma joined the BRICS bloc as a means of enhancing the economic and political status of South Africa in 2011. The authors argue that South Africa’s participation in the BRICS neoliberalism has become the dominant model of economic development throughout Africa in respect to trade and investment. The authors analyze the ‘soft balancing strategy’ used to increase the bargaining power of
developing countries to cooperate in interregional South-South alliances for foreign policy initiatives and economic development and to counter the influence of the North. Despite its recent GDP decline, South Africa is described as the regional hegemonic economic status and can provide technical and development support for many of its African neighbors. Yet, foreign policy decisions by South Africa often conflict with the other members of the BRICS bloc and political cooperation is not an aspect of this strategic alliance. The authors conclude that the ‘soft balancing strategy’ used in the South African participation in the BRICS bloc is primarily a neoliberal economic alliance that could ultimately benefit African economic development by promoting more trade and investment by its BRICS partners in infrastructural projects. They also assert that academics and researchers should play an active role in monitoring the BRICS bloc and collecting data that can be utilized by state and non-state actors in development planning.

We have five review essays on recent global issues in China and Japan. As in the past, we have a number of book reviews for those scholars who have an interest in interdisciplinary research and in globalization and its consequences throughout the world. Again, as we stated in our first issue of the journal, we intend to maintain this standard of generalized interdisciplinary readability for all of our essays and book reviews in future issues of our journal. We hope that you will subscribe to our journal to read future essays, review essays, and book reviews. We also invite you to submit essays, review essays, book reviews, and suggest possible book reviews for the journal.

Sincerely,

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