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Publishing in the Neoliberal and (Neo)Colonial Academy

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The Critical Internationalization Studies Network (CISN) and, subsequently, the *Critical Internationalization Studies Review* (CISR) were founded as spaces where scholars could come together to share through writing common interests and questions about the complexities of engaging in internationalization work, whether as practitioners, scholars, or both. This second volume of the CISR is a good example of the type of thoughtful exchanges that happen in these spaces. During 2021, we learned from scholars around the world who shared their ideas with our community on topics as diverse as decolonial approaches in the classroom, the hidden curriculum in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), international students and student mobility, and internationalization in times of crisis.

Though we are pleased to share this second volume of the CISR with a broader community, we must also acknowledge the complexities of critiquing the systems and structures in which many of us operate and from which we benefit. During the 2022 annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), we participated with other CISN members in a symposium on the role that spaces such as the CISN and CISR play in resisting the contemporary neoliberal and (neo)colonial academy. Here, we draw from reflections on this symposium to illustrate the complexities of navigating the neoliberal and (neo)colonial academy as a publishing entity.

Background

Neoliberalism in global higher education manifests in a number of ways, including competition amongst institutions of higher education in global rankings (e.g., Hazelkorn, 2021), competition for the best and brightest students (e.g., Yao, 2021), valuing of research and its associated funding mechanisms over the basic function of higher education to educate students (e.g., Haupt & Lee, 2021), and the imposition of funding mechanisms that value quantitative measures of student success over evidence of actual learning and growth (Kelchen, 2018). Neoliberalism and (neo)colonialism often intensify existing practices of racialized extraction and exploitation that have characterized western education for many centuries. Likewise, the modern/colonial global imaginary positions internationalization of higher education in the west as inherently innocent from any historical wrongdoings or as beyond the times of racial and colonial violences (Stein & Andreotti, 2017). We posit that it is possible (and necessary!) to create networks of resistance to the neoliberal, (neo)colonial academy. Networks such as the CISN that share the purpose of fostering critical, accountable, and self-reflexive conversations and collaborations

assist us in pushing back at purely economic and instrumental perspectives of international higher education.

However, in doing this work, we realize the many complexities, inconsistencies, and incongruencies that we face. On the one hand, we see the CISN and CISR as spaces to debate ideas around the pervasiveness that a single history of higher education internationalization has had; a story that seems to be mostly about success, benevolence, and peace-building endeavors that “inherently” result from engaging globally with “diverse Others.” In critiquing the fallacies and broken promises of internationalization, we acknowledge how we, as a group of individuals who share values and meaning systems, and who come together with a commitment toward critical agency and social justice, can have a positive effect in changing culture, narratives, and practices within an organization or, in this case, a field of studies. We embrace what Judy Marquez Kiyama (2016) and her colleagues have identified as a critical agency network, the notion that formal and social networks can engage in collective action to pursue systemic change. On the other hand, we realize that the CISN and CISR themselves live, operate, and exhibit structures following the same standards and practices of the hegemonic neoliberal academy. Borrowing from Audre Lorde (1984), the conundrum here is, can we dismantle the Master’s house (Academia), using the Master’s tools?

Building upon González and Shotton’s (2022) recent work, we envision and frame the CISN and CISR as sites for “coalitional refusal” of harmful institutional practices. We also see our work as a virtual space where we can collectively think, imagine, and design what Sharon Stein (2020) has defined as “Higher Education Otherwise” or “other possibilities for higher education that were previously invisibilized and unintelligible” (para. 14). But then again, who are we to say what constitutes an alternative without pushing our own biases? In using a tool like an academic society (e.g., CISN) or publication (e.g., CISR) to push out our idea of the alternative, we can easily fall into the trap of harmful promises from the past, such as aspiring to “certainty and predictability” or claiming (consciously or unconsciously) “epistemic and moral authority,” highlighting our own “human exceptionalism, presumed innocence; and entitlements to hope” (para. 12). Or, in the words of González and Shotton (2022), a trap of feeding “the academy’s desire for quick fixes, fast work, and lack of appetite for deep learning and real accountability,” (p. 550).

Questions from the CISR Editorial Team

In specific reference to this publication, the second volume of the CISR, the editorial team is currently grappling with several questions that derive from this background context. One overarching question relates to how we can better incorporate decolonial practices into the way that we accept and review submissions to the CISN and, subsequently, the CISR. This question is particularly important in light of the fact that we currently publish submissions only in English. While we would like to accept publications in other languages, particularly those of currently and formerly colonized individuals and cultures, publishing in multiple languages requires resources and expertise that we currently lack. How might we go about gathering these resources so that we are able to expand our languages of publication to honor multiple approaches to discussing critical internationalization? Along similar lines, even if we remain an English-only publication, how can we effectively and efficiently review submissions while respecting that English is a global language and therefore manifests in multiple varieties that may or may not coincide with our own?

In the coming year, we hope to experiment with potential means of addressing these important questions.

A second overarching question involves how we currently disseminate and draw interest to CISN publications. While we are pleased to see that the number of subscribers to the CISN Newsletter consistently grows each month, and the full versions of articles in the first (2021) volume of the CISR were accessed almost 500 times between June and December 2022, we recognize that in many ways we continue to speak to a sympathetic audience. How might we share our publications with a broader audience so as to encourage critical approaches in internationalization research and practice more generally? Perhaps one approach to broadening our audience is to publish longer-form articles, particularly those of an empirical nature. Of course, this strategy brings us back to the issue of human resources to support such an endeavor.

Conclusion

Still, from these complexities, uncertainties, and even places of discomfort, we emerge and remain optimistic. We gather and partner to “refuse to abide by the neoliberal norms and practices that hold U.S. higher education in place” (González & Shotton, 2022, p. 541). Instead, we come together with an open heart, with a commitment to listening and learning from each other so we can challenge current epistemic hierarchies. Through the CISN as a coalition, we seek to create a space to think and act trans-locally, to engage with one another and be in relationship across borders, geographic, political, and epistemic.

The essays that comprise this second volume of the CISR exemplify this multiplicity of perspective through *Critical Voices* pieces that pique our intellectual curiosity, *Practice Briefs* that provide implications and recommendations for internationalization in practice, and *Research Briefs* that invite us to continue theorizing about internationalization from a critical perspective. In this first section, Marisa Lally reflects on decolonizing higher education in the classroom from the perspective of a graduate student instructor, Abu Arif and Melissa Whatley summarize an interview with leaders in the field regarding challenges and opportunities in the international higher education “post-pandemic” landscape, and Sharin Shajahan Naomi discusses non-western ways of writing, particular with reference to her own dissertation work. Also in this volume’s *Critical Voices* section are pieces from Suhao Peng, who critiques current approaches to working with international students, and Charles Brown, who brings a fresh perspective to the hidden curriculum and internationalization in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Also included in this section is a three-part series of essays from Kalyani Unkule, where the author discusses how study abroad practice can be refreshed from a basis of reconciliation as falling apart.

Practitioner Briefs in this volume include a piece from Chelsey Laird, who reflects on how to bring critical reflections into higher education practitioners’ experience in the recent global pandemic, an essay from Jenna Mittelmeier, Sylvie Lomer, and Kalyani Unkule, who discuss critical considerations for research with international students as a subfield, and Abu Arif et al., who discuss approaches to supporting international students during the recent war in Ukraine. Finally, as *Research Briefs*, we hear from Minghui (Hannah) Hou, Jing Yu, and Shinji Katsumoto in a pair of essays focused on methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of international students. To close this section, CISN founder Dr. Sharon Stein reflects on the contents of her new book *Unsettling the University: Confronting the Colonial Foundations of US Higher Education* which is an invitation to use a decolonial lens to reconsider the history of higher education.

In closing, we want to express gratitude to the individuals who contributed intellectual energy to the thoughts that we summarize in this editorial, particularly our ASHE symposium collaborators, Chrystal George Mwangi, Gian Hernandez, Jhuliane Silva, Sharon Stein, and Christina Yao, and the other members of our editorial team, Abu Arif and Chris Fuglestad. Remaining errors and shortcomings are our own.

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