

Developing Globally Minded, Critical Media Literacy Skills

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Abstract

The transnational movement of people and ideas continues to reshape how we imagine places and cultures. Considering the volume of information and entertainment delivered and consumed via mass media, global educators are tasked with engaging students in learning activities that help them develop skill sets that include a globally minded, critical media literacy. Grounded in cultural studies and framed by Andreotti's (2006) theory of critical GCE and Appadurai's (1996) concept of mediascapes, this article examines how eleven global educators in as many countries used films to teach about what they considered to be the "6 C's" of critical global media literacy: colonialism, capitalism, conflict, citizenship, and conscientious consumerism. How global educators foster globally minded, critical media literacy in their classrooms, the resources they use to teach about perspectives too often marginalized in media produced in the Global North, and how educating students about media informs action within global citizenship education is discussed. Findings from the study revealed that the opportunities to interact with fellow educators around the world inspired teacher's to revisit concepts such as interconnectedness and cross-cultural learning, along with shifts in thinking about how to teach media literacy by analyzing the coded messages present in the resources they use to teach about the world.

***Keywords:** critical literacy, global education, films, mediascapes.*

Introduction

Technologies that include Netflix, Youtube, Hulu, satellite television, tablets, and smartphones, to name a few, have democratized production and consumption, as well as provided cheaper and quicker access to information and entertainment in some parts of the world. Researchers argue that because of this increased access, many U.S. students are more likely to learn about history and the current state of the planet by engaging with film and web-based media outside of a classroom rather than reading books or conducting primary source research in one (Stoddard & Marcus, 2010). As more avenues of access become available and cultures are deterritorialized, social studies teachers are faced with challenges and opportunities to include more voices and perspectives when teaching about culture, conflict, and citizenship in our global society (Appadurai, 1996; Gaudelli & Siegel, 2010; Merryfield, 1998). Already charged with developing civic literacy, social studies educators are well positioned to utilize films as texts for

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building critical thinking, disrupting how students imagine the world, and including voices too often marginalized by media produced about the Global South in the Global North.

Using films that elevate counter-narratives within world history is an important, but rare approach when developing students' global perspectives. Relying upon Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* (1982) to teach about India's fight for independence or Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* (2001) to teach about East Africa or post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy, instead of films produced in the places where the events one is teaching about transpired and/or that center on perspectives that disrupt narratives that favor the Global North, tend to perpetuate a colonizer's gaze. Based on data drawn from a research project that included educators from around the world, this article couples theory and practice to answer the question: How do educators teach about perspective to develop globally minded critical media literacy skills? Findings from a five-month study that utilized on-line discussion forums to bring 120 International Baccalaureate (IB) teachers in 36 countries together revealed that educators used films to: (1) help students think more critically about images and messages encoded in media; (2) introduce the perspectives of those who are often marginalized in films produced in the Global North to develop perspective consciousness and a critical lens for analyzing inequity within global systems; and (3) prompt students to reflect on media production and consumption habits away from school as a way to self-evaluate their media and civic literacy skills.

The positionality of the teachers who participated in the study is also considered, since participants came from countries that have been, and to some extent still are, colonizers and colonized. Participants shared that because the discussion forums gave them opportunity to interact with educators who teach a similar curriculum but live in different parts of the world and are from different cultural backgrounds, the importance of context and perspective when teaching about people and places became clearer to them. Data analysis revealed that teachers in the Global South tended to challenge the ways in which narratives were constructed and the degree of criticality used to analyze films more often than teachers in the Global North. Teachers in the Global South not only discussed problems they see with films, but offered alternatives to better capture the perspectives of people who live in the areas and who deal with the issues teachers identified as part of the IB curriculum. These perspectives—which IB teachers agreed are not often included within discussion of film and other texts—provided new ways of thinking about how to teach about inequality and power dynamics within a shared curriculum.

Data show that across the history, English, science, art, and civics courses that were represented in the discussion forums, the most frequently discussed global issues were capitalism, citizenship, and colonialism, along with concepts related to conflict and consuming media. Yet, how the teachers approached the issues and the films they use differed, and the discussion forums provided space for deep discussions about experiences related to these global issues, and the shaping of their own perspectives and biases. These “6 C’s”—capitalism, citizenship, colonialism, conflict, and conscientious consumerism—provide a framework that global educators can employ when they teach critical thinking skills related to global issues and media consumption. The films that teachers used, the questions and concepts they presented to students, and what these practices mean for the future of critically minded global education and digital media literacy are discussed below.

Cultural Studies and Critical Global Education

Teaching students about culture and its complexities, while trying to provide a conceptual understanding with which they can work, is a “messy” endeavor (McRobbie, 1992). Teaching about culture is further complicated because the expedited movement of people and ideas in our global age means that cultures “have their locations, but it is no longer easy to say where they originate” (Hall, 2006, p. 164). As “an interdisciplinary endeavor concerned with the analysis of cultural forms and activities,” cultural studies can inform the work of global educators, because like critical global education, cultural studies provides theoretical tools for analyzing the power relations “which condition [the] production, circulation, deployment and, of course, effects” of culture (Bennett, 1998, p. 60).

For IB teachers and global educators alike, teaching for global mindedness, or world mindedness as the concept is referred to within the IB curriculum, comprises “a frame of reference, or value orientation, favoring a worldview of the problems of humanity, with mankind, rather than nationals of a particular country as the primary reference group” (Sampson & Smith, 1957). Developing global mindedness also involves a willingness to be open-minded (Merryfield, 2012) and continual reflection upon why and how people come to have a different perspective of global systems and global issues (Case, 1993; Hanvey, 1976; Tarman, 2016). Pertinent to the geopolitical dynamics present within this study—where participants teach as well as the production sites of the films they used—is Andreotti’s (2006) distinction between soft and critical GCE.

When analyzing the “justification for positions of privilege (in the Global North and South),” a “Soft GCE” tends to focus on tropes about the North that emphasize “development, [a] harder work [ethic], better use of resources, and technology,” whereas a “Critical GCE” approach includes analyzing systems of oppression that examines how people and nations “benefit from and [execute] control over unjust and violent systems and structures” that disproportionately disadvantage the Global South (Andreotti & Pashby, 2013, p. 426). Critical examination of these global systems requires including people from a spectrum of places and social positions, however, despite their best intentions, educators often use films to teach about the world that are produced by American and European companies and often wrought with biases and incomplete narratives of historical events or contemporary global issues (Merryfield, 1998). Interested in the extent to which global educators think critically about media resources used in the classroom, this article features the films and strategies used by educators in countries still scarred by colonialism, yet largely absent from work in global education. Attention is given to the questions and strategies used to analyze the content of films, as well as the significance of who directs, produces, and stars in a film.

Culture and Media Studies

Media constitutes the whole range of modern communications—television, cinema, video, radio, Internet, music, magazines, and games—and media texts are the programs, films, images, websites, and more consumed by mass audiences (Buckingham, 2003, p. 2). Meaning making through media is an on-going process of encoding and decoding messages that are widely distributed because the codes are often learned at an early age (such as racism, sexism, and “othering” more broadly) and thus reach near universal or “naturalized” meaning (Hall, 2006, p. 165). The symbols and “naturalized” codes embedded in films and television programming that are often passively consumed by audiences have, over time, combined to form a mass or popular culture that works to build consensus around shared values and beliefs. Consequently, the (re)presentations of people, time, and place that are presented to us in school or that we consume at home and in public spaces shape how we imagine the world, what we purchase, and what we come to accept as “normal” behaviors.

The development of a media and culture industry during the twentieth century combined to form a dialectic between economic production and social and cultural production (Giroux, 2011, p. 22). Adorno argued that a “non-spontaneous, reified, phony” ideological mass or popular culture

had been manufactured by the culture industry so that “the subliminal message of almost all that passed for art was conformity and resignation” (Jay, 1972, p. 216). While critiques of Hollywood’s role as a homogenizing force have not elapsed, according to Giroux (2011), a more contemporary analysis of the relationship between media and mass culture finds that industrial capitalism has infiltrated education since society and schools have become saturated with media technology and consumerism (Giroux, 2011, p. 23). Concern with the manufacturing of an Americanized mass culture that is disseminated through media—what Hoggart termed “shiny barbarism”—frames this discussion about why the use of film to teach about global issues in schools must include analysis of the production process as well as the product.

Theorizing Global Media Consumption through “scapes”

As global communication networks expand, “the processes of so-called free and forced migrations are changing the composition, diversifying the cultures and pluralizing the cultural identities of the older dominant nation states...and indeed the globe itself” (Hall, 1999, p. 16). Appadurai’s (1996) mediascapes, ideoscapes, and technoscapes help us understand that “as the shapes of cultures grow less bounded and tacit, more fluid and politicized, the work of cultural reproduction becomes a daily hazard” (p. 45), thus requiring a critical global media literacy education aimed at ensuring that the subaltern speak and are heard in social studies classrooms (Spivak, 1988).

The suffix “scape” “allows us to point to the fluid, irregular landscapes...that are constructed according to perspectives formed across multiple, intersecting networks” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3). It is important to see “scapes” not as the physical wires, satellites, or other means by which information and signals are transferred (although these play a role), but the political, historical, and linguistic situation of individuals across interconnected networks that influence how they imagine the world. Therefore, we understand mediascapes to be transmitters of images that are embedded with “codes” that serve to reify the meanings mass media outlets want to convey about people, places, cultures, events, and ideas (Appadurai, 1996; Hall, 2006). Similar to Anderson’s (1991) discussion of the formation of “imagined communities” through print culture, mediascapes disseminate information digitally and, due to a growing rate of accessibility, erase distance to provide a sense of connectedness for people around the world who may never meet in person. Regardless of the medium, consumers must recognize that information can be manipulated

to highlight differences as part of a national and transnational project undertaken by nation-states and media producers to mold ideologies for political purposes (p. 15).

Politicizing media images to counter ideologies that aim to undermine state power constitute ideoscapes (p. 36). Important to understanding the function of ideoscapes is that they are flexible and often the meaning ascribed to an image, idea, or place differs from how they are received. Increased accessibility due to technoscapes—the fluid, global configurations that include high and low, mechanical and informational technologies that move across multiple boundaries (p. 34)—further the reach of ideoscapes, but the views and voices included remain inequitable and disproportionately from the Global North. As multinational media conglomerates such as Time Warner, News Corp, The Star Media Group, Naspers, to name a few, continue to expand globally, examining transnational mediascapes, ideoscapes, and technoscapes is important for understanding how power holders shape ideology and manipulate culture through media.

Methodology

Discussion forums were identified as the most appropriate tool for conducting research because in order to discuss teaching about global perspectives, it is important to include as many educators from as many places as possible (Harshman & Augustine, 2013). A benefit of online research is a high level of participant interaction, leading to greater emphasis on participant perspective and a decrease in researcher bias, therefore increasing the credibility of the study (Gaiser, 2008). The flexibility afforded by the use of asynchronous communication compared to in-person interviews meant participating teachers could focus on topics they found interesting or relevant to their teaching responsibilities and avoid those that were not (Hewson & Laurent, 2008; Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Wang, 2011). Since exchanges in the forums often generated new topics under the general research questions, participants, rather than the researchers, determined whom they interacted with, what topics they focused on, and what new topics they were interested in pursuing (Harshman & Augustine, 2013).

Participants

Representatives of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) at The Hague contacted 150 teachers about participating in the study and 120 in 36 different countries agreed to participate. A four-person research team was organized at a large Midwestern University in the United States to create, facilitate, and troubleshoot the online discussions and produce a research

report based on data generated within the forums for the IBO. Upon giving consent, each participant was randomly assigned to a discussion forum of 10-15 teachers based on recommendations that small groups are more conducive for conducting on-line discussions so that participants do not have to navigate an exhaustive number of messages (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Although assigned to a discussion group, participants could read posts in any forum and one forum was designated for Spanish speakers so as not to privilege English as the only language in which one could participate. The Spanish language forum included participants from the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, and Ecuador and a translator was hired to help facilitate discussions and transcribe forum posts. All of the teachers featured in this article were part of one of the twelve discussion forums that were used during the study.

Table 1

Participant Demographics.

Teachers (*all names are pseudonyms)	Birth Country	Location of school	Subject(s) taught
Martin	Canada	Taiwan	Environmental Science
Vijay	India	India	Theory of Knowledge, Humanities
Joyce	England	England	Humanities
Marlene	Hungary	Hungary	Art
Betty	Ghana	Ghana	Theory of Knowledge
Nadine	India	India	History, Civics
Shawn	United States	United States	Economics
Angela	China	Canada	History, Global Issues
Luis	Dominican Republic	Costa Rica	Humanities
Maria	Colombia	Colombia	Literature
Llana	Brazil	Brazil	Art

Data Analysis

Triangulation, or the use of different sources of information during research, enhances the validity of the research as well as the accuracy with which the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences is represented (Moustakis, 1990). Data were drawn from written responses by teachers to questions posed by the researchers and fellow participants in the discussion forums, one-on-one Skype interviews with participants who volunteered to speak with a researcher about ideas generated around media literacy and resources, a review of lesson plans and resources posted

by teachers to the discussion forum, and email correspondence between teachers and researchers that included an exit reflection on one's participation in the project. In total, participants contributed 1,465 messages over the course of five months, with six participants volunteering to participate in one, thirty-minute Skype interview after their respective on-line sessions concluded (Augustine, Harshman, & Merryfield, 2015).

Discussion posts, emails, interview transcripts, and resources posted to the forum were collated and identifying data such as names and schools were replaced with pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. The country in which the participants teach, the types of schools in which participants work (public, independent, international), and the subject(s) they teach were maintained. Using the constant comparative method of content analysis, the researchers coded the data and organized it into categories of tentative findings. Categories were initially created in relation to the first part of the research question—How do educators teach about perspectives?—and what emerged included: cross-cultural learning, analyzing stereotypes, multiple texts, self-reflection, guest speakers, inquiry and research, use of films and other media, and interacting with people in the community. Interested in pursuing the role of media in the classroom and how teachers develop critical literacy skills by teaching with media, the initial categories were further analyzed to develop new categories to answer the second part of the research question: How do teachers develop globally minded critical media literacy skills? While teachers identified music, books, online news sources, blogs, and Youtube videos as tools for teaching perspective and literacy skills in tandem, films were clearly the preferred means for teaching these skills and concepts.

The categories that emerged from data drawn from twelve discussion forums were compared by the researchers for inter-rater reliability on interpretation of data into emergent categories. Categories on how teachers conceptualize and teach about perspectives using films that emerged include: open-mindedness; attitudes and values such as empathy, respect, and caring; perspective consciousness; and cross-cultural learning. Closer analysis, however, revealed that the geographic location of the teachers was important to evaluations of films because teachers living in areas of the world that had been or remain under colonial structures—which also constituted the areas of the world that IB teachers living in the Global North more often associated with global issues such as poverty, conflict, human rights, injustice, etc.—raised questions and offered points that were more critical of films identified as “good resources” for teaching about global issues.

This led researchers to pursue how participants, in discussing the tools and strategies they use to teach for perspective building and critical media literacy, also engaged one another in a critical analysis of the films they recommend and use in their classrooms to accomplish these goals within the discussion forums.

Analysis of categories and examples shared by participants showed that teachers tend to highlight what I am calling “6 C’s” when using films to teach for and about perspectives and critical global media literacy: colonialism, capitalism, conflict, citizenship, and conscientious consumerism. The questions and conceptualizations provided in Table 2 are derived from analysis of discussions between participants on how they use films to teach about global issues while building media literacy skills and, within those discussions, points raised that challenged the way in which narratives about “others” were presented. The recommended questions were generated from a synthesis of lesson ideas shared by teachers in the forums, one-on-one Skype interviews on how films are used to teach concepts and skills pertinent to developing critical media literacy about global power dynamics, and the questions participants asked each other regarding the films and media sources they use.

Table 2.

Teaching and Learning Critical Global Media Literacy Skills

“Six C’s”	Conceptualization	Recommended questions
Colonialism (including neo-colonialism and anti-colonialism)	Beyond political and economic forces, cultural hegemony operates as a neocolonial force that can cause people to compromise cultural practices, take actions to resist the “soft power” of culture, and/or engage in practices that demonstrate cultural hybridity. Colonialism should not be treated as a backdrop or relegated to the past when viewing films, but understood as a constant presence across time and place.	How is power distributed in the film?, Who are the writers, directors, producers, and stars of the film?, What stereotypes did filmmakers rely upon to represent a people or place? How does the film making process operate as a colonizing force and/or provide agency?
Capitalism	In addition to discussions of wealth, poverty, and who and what constitutes the middle class, issues of labor, property, access, scarcity, freedom of choice, and the significance of transnational global institutions, including Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood, and more, can be analyzed.	How are issues of class and inequity depicted or ignored in the film?, How does global capitalism directly or indirectly affect the characters and plot lines?, What myths regarding capitalism are portrayed and/or disrupted in

		the film?
Conflict	Examine macro and micro-level systems and institutions, as well as person vs. person, person vs. self, person vs. nature, and person vs. technology. <i>All other aspects of this table can be explored through this lens.</i>	How do issues and people change over time within the film?, What are the counter arguments to the narrative presented in the film?, Are the solutions presented in the film sustainable, responsible, ethical, and inclusive?
Citizenship	Citizenship includes, but is not limited to, issues of civil and human rights, belonging, inequality, mobility, “othering”, and privilege. Films can be used to evaluate how citizenship and belonging is engaged or denied based on intersections of geography, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, religion, history, ability and disability, age, class, culture, and institutions.	Who is represented in, and absent from, the film?, What statuses and identities are privileged and marginalized in the film?, In what ways is citizenship presented as being local, national, and/or global, and for whom?
Conscientious Consumerism	Critically self-reflect on preferred sources of information and entertainment, including examination of what takes place “behind the scenes” to create the film and one’s connectedness to the issues presented in the films.	What and who did the narrative(s) presented in the film leave out?, What sources and new information are needed to develop a more well-rounded perspective on the issues depicted?, What roles do viewers play in perpetuating and/or what are the viewer’s responsibilities for minimizing the issues and concerns viewed in the film?

The online forums provided space for teachers to start new discussion threads around topics they were interested in pursuing, thus decentering the role of researcher as facilitator. Data collected over the five month study revealed that teachers in the Global North, though working to improve student understanding of the world, often relied upon resources about the Global South that were not produced in those areas of the world. The opportunity for teachers in the Global North to interact with teachers who lived and taught in the countries depicted in the films and other media sources they used to teach about global issues provided more context and sometimes counter narratives to the perspectives included in the films teachers in the Global North described in the discussion forums as “insightful” and “balanced.” As a result, participants were simultaneously discussing how they teach for critical global media literacy while engaging in cross-cultural

learning experience that assisted in their own perspective building and critical media literacy.

Findings

Films are often used as a “visual textbook” to convey what happened in history or to teach historiography, as well as prompt analysis of the accuracy and reliability of the images and narratives students are bombarded with in and out of a classroom (Gaudelli & Siegel, 2010; Russell, 2012a, 2012b). Also considered to be an entertaining way of presenting content information, films, as texts to be interpreted, help students develop literacy skills applicable beyond the classroom (Kaya & Çengleci, 2011). Further, as the production of visual entertainment has become decentered, allowing more people to create and distribute videos, as well as low-budget motion pictures and documentaries, more perspectives on global issues are available for consideration. Although covering all perspectives and angles of a global issue is not possible in a given class session or even school year, introducing students to different ways of thinking about the world so that they can develop a skill set as critically minded consumers of global media is possible.

For Joyce, an IB Humanities teacher in England, students “can engage in the global community by striving to be informed through a variety of sources of information; [particularly] their home media and that which they can access from abroad.” Similarly, Marlene, who grew up in Hungary when it was under Soviet occupation and is now an IB Art teacher there, emphasized the importance of “looking for voices not typically included in curricula and mainstream media” so as to consider global issues for multiple perspectives that include people across the socio-economic spectrum. According to Martin, an IB Environmental Science teacher in Taiwan, in order for educators to teach about global mindedness, they must be aware that much of our academic knowledge and news reflects a western perspective and is limited by cultural assumptions.

Understanding people different from us seems more necessary because of the world’s increasing globalisation and our own interconnectedness with it but to create genuinely global students we need to be genuinely global teachers.

The essence of Martin’s argument couples Andreotti’s call for critical perspectives when teaching and learning about the world with Appadurai’s theoretical discussion of the distribution of power and privilege through media and information technology. By teaching about biases within

media, as Martin suggests, globally minded educators not only reflect upon their own media consumption habits, but help students develop similar habits of mind and skills as part of critical global media literacy education. The remainder of the article discusses the three most common issues addressed by teachers across their respective courses—global capitalism, colonialism, and citizenship—and how the approaches taken by IB teachers in the study generated the aforementioned framework that can inform how social studies educators use films to teach about and for critical global media literacy.

Teaching About Capitalism with Films

For Betty, a Theory of Knowledge teacher in Ghana, discussions about capitalism and poverty are often colored by the privilege most of her students possess. Betty posted in a discussion forum that it is not uncommon for her students to “comment negatively on people’s poverty as self-inflicted or generalize the reasons of poverty. Therefore, my task as a teacher seems to [be to] work on clarification on the variety of reasons of poverty and the privilege of other factors such as education, socioeconomic circumstances, etc.” Betty’s post led Nadine to share a few resources she uses to teach about poverty, including websites (mostly produced in the Global North, including the BBC and the Media Awareness Network), the value of using Youtube, and her use of Bollywood produced films. However, it was her use of a film about an Indian family produced by a branch of the Walt Disney Corporation located in India that included the most detailed discussion.

Nadine’s choice of the film *Do Dooni Char* (2010) is significant because it was the first Disney International film produced in India. In this film the family patriarch and main character, Santosh Duggal, must balance family honor and multiple jobs—including the familiar trope of working at a call center in India—as Santosh tries to become more “western” by purchasing his own car. Although produced and directed by Indian filmmakers, life for people in the city of Delhi (where most of the movie was filmed) appears destitute. Part commentary on income inequality in India, cultural norms are also called into question as problems are created and resolved when characters, to an extent, compromise Indian culture by consuming what represents Western culture (i.e. clothing, a car, music, etc.). In fact, comparing the presentation of India in *Do Dooni Char* with Disney’s depiction of nineteenth century India in *Around the World in 80 Days* (2004), as was suggested by the research team in the discussion forum, not only reveals the continued presence of colonialism in the more contemporary Disney film, but a troubled narrative that favors

cultural binaries instead of hybridity created through cross-cultural and technologically mediated exchanges (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994).

To learn more about how Nadine uses a film, a Skype interview was conducted after the discussion forums concluded. Recognizing that the film is incomplete and depicts only a certain sector of India's population, Nadine uses the story of Dhirubhai Ambani, the founder of Reliance Industries—the largest corporate conglomerate in India and located only five miles from where Nadine teaches. Nadine stated that it is well known that the man who became the CEO of Reliance—a company ranked 135th on the 2014 Forbes Global 2000 list—was born into extreme poverty (Chen, Murphy, & Bigman, 2014). Ambani achieved a place of power and great wealth not because of where he went to school, according to Nadine, but how he received it and what he did with it. Through this local example, students discuss the extent to which upward mobility is possible in India and whether such opportunity is equally accessible for everyone, and compare their research with the narrative presented in *Do Dooni Char*. Most students, Nadine reported, point out that while capitalism may allow some people to advance in society, the film does not address the social hierarchies and cultural traditions around class, gender, and religion in India that prevent all people from doing the same. Some students in her classes see the compromises that Santosh and his family are willing to make with regard to their cultural practices as necessary in order to advance in society, while others thought that the film is just a modern version of how globalization can destroy local cultures and economies. Some of the questions listed in Table 2 were generated from the examples Nadine shared as part of her work with students on developing deeper understandings of how neo-colonialism operates as an oppressive force, the complexity of cultures, and different forms of resistance against poverty and cultural imperialism across time and place.

Nadine's discussion of how she teaches about the intersection of culture and capitalism prompted Shawn, an IB Economics teacher in the United States, to share how he uses the documentary film *The End of Poverty* (2008). Narrated by American actor Martin Sheen, the film interjects images of slums in South Africa and Latin America with interviews with Nobel Prize winning economists and scholars Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, as well as activists from Venezuela, Brazil, Kenya, and Tanzania. For Shawn, this film is a useful tool for not only teaching students about the causes of institutionalized poverty around the world, but also fostering critical media literacy through consideration of questions that require them to analyze who was involved

with the production and distribution of the film: an American narrator, scholars and academics who are not currently living or working in the areas discussed in the film, and a director, Phillippe Diaz, who has produced a number of films about neo-colonialism and the Global South, and activists seeking to end the damaging effects of global capitalism. Shawn's approach reflects Appadurai's discussion of infoscapes and mediascapes because he used the film to teach critical thinking not just about global issues, but about how media is constructed and distributed, and how points of view are privileged depending on who tells the story. Shawn also exemplifies the need for teachers to alert students to the fact that even the best intentions to include discussion of global systems and oppression can be incomplete if one relies upon films produced in the Global North to teach about the Global South because they too often perpetuate and fail to critically address another example of the "6 C's" framework: colonialism.

Teaching About Colonialism with Films

Colonialism and the "soft power" of media culture have not only marginalized the voices of many people, but from a cultural studies perspective, as Nadine, an IB History and Civics teacher in India pointed out, "colonization has had a major impact on how we see our culture and our rigid traditions. It hasn't enabled people to think beyond the social norms that have been laid down by the community and that is one of the reasons that this social disparity between classes still exists." As a tenth grade history and global issues teacher in Canada, Angela encourages her students to think of the world as being made up of "many different economies that create many different worlds, all in one." To help her students understand the perspectives of colonizers and the colonized with regard to global economics, Angela uses a case study and films to study Jamaica and Ethiopia. The film *Life and Debt* (2001) focuses on attempts at decolonization as well as the continued control exerted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over Jamaica when the country "tried to open markets to trade, particularly bananas, and how that has basically been detrimental to Jamaica."

Angela's unit also includes a case study on Ethiopia and use of the film *Black Gold* (2006) to examine the multiple parties and perspectives involved in the production and trade of coffee in the world market. When asked during a Skype interview why she uses these films to teach about poverty, Angela pointed out that a single film does not cover enough and

if students are to understand the consequences of their purchases and the way the world conducts trade, they have to see people affected by those systems. Poverty has different levels, not just living on the street. When students see working conditions and corrupt governments, but the countries involved practice democracy, they see these types of poverty and how they are connected. The role it [poverty] plays in developing nations, so they [students] ask themselves: Do I need this?

While effective teaching tools, Angela admitted that she was conflicted over the fact that the aforementioned films were produced and distributed by American film companies. Although the films address the complexities and conflicts of colonialism and capitalism that led to poverty in Jamaica and Ethiopia, like Shawn's approach to teaching about mediascapes, Angela goes beyond the content of film by teaching about who the producers of these films are and the presence of biases in the storytelling. Angela's use of questions such as "What stereotypes did filmmakers rely upon to represent a people or place?" and "How does the film making process operate as a colonizing force and/or provide agency?" (listed in Table Two), prompts students to analyze the power structures that shape the codes and scapes involved in the production and consumption of films.

In response to Angela's discussion of films and colonialism, Luis, a Humanities teacher in Costa Rica, shared why he used *Blood in the Mobile* (2010) to teach about conflict caused by in the Democratic Republic of Congo over the illegal mining of minerals used to make cellular phones. According to Luis, this film provides opportunity to "teach students about how complex global issues are and, as a teacher, why talking about imperialism and colonialism as nineteenth century topics that disappeared after WWII is just not true. We are still living in a world of colonizers and colonized and the phones students use literally connect them to those issues." Class discussions about *Blood in the Mobile* included reflection by students on their responsibility as conscientious consumers since they use phones that contain the very minerals people in the film dig out of the ground. Luis shared that some of the questions he posed to students included "How does global capitalism directly or indirectly affect the characters and plot lines?" and "What roles do viewers play in perpetuating and/or what are the viewer's responsibilities for minimizing the

issues and concerns depicted in the film?” (see Table Two). Luis’s students also analyze advertisements sponsored by the corporations mentioned in *Blood in the Mobile* as part of a discussion on how mediascapes and technoscapes can be manipulated by power holders to provide a one-sided narrative about the benefits of globalization and technology. How students consume and the extent to which they critically examine these codes related to global issues such as migration, borders, technology, and more, is an integral component of critical global citizenship (Andreotti, 2006).

Teaching About Citizenship with Films

Maria, a literature teacher in Colombia, believes it is important that students understand that the hardships people experience in Bogota, Colombia are, in some ways, shared across multiple places. To accomplish this goal she uses the film *Al Otro Lado* (“The Other Side”) (2001) to teach about the complexities of citizenship, emigration, and immigration, with particular attention to the multiple local and international causes of poverty.

Based on the experiences of three different children who are looking to reconnect with their respective fathers, the film addresses immigration and citizenship in Mexico, the United States, Morocco, Spain, and Cuba. This Spanish language film was written and directed by Gustavo Loza, who was born and still lives in Mexico and not only addresses the push and pull factors often associated with migration, but also how where a person is and/or who they are effects the extent to which they possess a sense of belonging and citizenship. Of particular significance to this film is the issue of gender, as all three children are looking to reconnect with their fathers, providing students with an opportunity to discuss patriarchy within and across cultures, as well as the intersection of gender and citizenship through the use of case studies. Maria shared that when her students watch *Al Otro Lado*, they discuss national and global citizenship, how national borders came to be drawn, and how the continued displacement of indigenous peoples around the world impacts debates about citizenship today.

In response to Maria’s discussion post about *Al Otro Lado*, Llana, an IB Art teacher in Brazil, started a new thread on women and citizenship in film. Llana recommended the 2009 Iranian film *Zanan-e bedun-e mardan* (“Women without Men”) because, as she wrote in the discussion forum, “it tells the story of how four Iranian women stand up to the oppressive beliefs and abuses of the men in their lives (mostly relatives) and religion while the country deals with the political and cultural influence of the United States.” Mention of this film led teachers to

recommend two other films about women in in the Middle East. One, entitled *Veiled Voices* (2009), is a one-hour documentary about women who serve as religious leaders in Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon. What makes the film compelling is that although the views of the women in the film focus on what Islam entails could be considered conservative, their movement to unite women across the Middle East is interpreted as liberal since they are engaging in resistance against their exclusion from positions of power by men. The second film recommended by teachers was *Persepolis* (2007)—based on the graphic novel published in 2000—because the protagonist in the story is an Iranian woman seeking to be free of the oppressive manner in which women are treated despite being citizens of Iran. Set in the late 1970s at the time of the Iranian Revolution, *Persepolis* is opposed to the conservative cultural change that is taking place and resists the oppressive nature of her family, her culture, and her country.

The “6 C’s” of what to address when teaching for critical global media literacy through film—colonialism, capitalism, conflict, citizenship, and conscientious consumerism—are present across all of the films shared by the IB teachers. While the use of films from around the world, and the development of a critical media literacy to dissect how films are constructed, are positive steps towards teaching for global mindedness, teachers identified making connections to local issues of capitalism, colonialism, and citizenship to be a limitation of using films to teach about global issues. The most often cited reasons for this difficulty is the belief by students that poverty is faced by people in “other” countries, colonialism ended decades ago, and becoming a citizen requires a few forms and passing a test.

Discussion

Students are often situated between social studies curricula that prioritize the past and personal technologies that connect them almost exclusively to current trends and issues. Although increased access and connectivity to multiple global “scapes” is a reality for some, the existence of a digital divide between and within the Global North and South means many people are not equitably represented in classrooms. For Vijay, an IB Humanities and Theory of Knowledge teacher in India, access to technology and media “are a privilege, not a right [and] coming from a developing nation, I came to understand that...there is a language power structure: the amount of quality content varies across languages—English seems to take over in the digital realm. What happens with those who don’t speak English?” As consumers of digital media, it is important that

students and teachers not only think critically about the messages encoded in a film, but the power holders who determine what and who is edited out as part of education for digital citizenship (Goode, 2010).

Teaching about global issues with film, while important, has limits since all films contain mediated codes that are often incomplete and produced in the interest of advancing a particular perspective. Engagement by teachers and students in analysis of the “scapes” that operate behind the scenes (so to speak), and that disseminate the narratives and messages that are present in all films, is of equal importance to reading for information in literacy education. That is, using a film to teach about a topic, era, or event in history must be accompanied by discussion of the company or companies involved in the production of the film, the reliance upon or attempt to disrupt stereotypes, and the evidence offered to forward an argument, just as one would with any text used in a classroom. The strategies, conceptualizations, and discussion questions offered by the teachers involved in this project are part of the broader application of the digital media literacy skills students need to be prepared to employ when they are away from the classroom (Greenhow, 2010). Global educators who use some or all of the questions listed in Table Two can create learning experiences that require students to think deeper about the narratives used to teach about places and people, as well as those that are not discussed in a visual, audio, or print text.

The teachers who participated in this study illustrate well the benefits of bringing educators together to converse with people in the places they teach about in order to develop more nuanced understandings of perspectives and issues. Findings from the study revealed that the opportunities to interact with fellow educators around the world inspired teacher’s to revisit concepts such as interconnectedness and cross-cultural learning, along with shifts in thinking about how to teach media literacy by analyzing the coded messages present in the resources they use to teach about the world. The absence of a central task in favor of a decentered space allowed participants to initiate and participate in a range of discussion topics and proved to provide a greater level of ownership on their part. Many participants shared in post-study reflections that the discussion forums provided a rare and valuable opportunity to learn from colleagues from around the world; something that they had not previously experienced. Conversations about environmentalism, citizenship, and the resources used to teach about global perspectives revealed that educators in the Global South, by sharing local realities and perspectives on a global issue that fellow participants taught about, provided insights that even the most well researched films overlooked.

The very nature of the on-line group discussions meant that teachers were engaged in the critical text analysis they all agreed was important for students to complete. The on-line discussion forums proved to be a valuable tool that not only provided participants with new resources, but challenged them to re-evaluate how they used films to teach about point of view analysis, power, and media production.

A limitation to the study, however, was that beyond the biographies, not much time was spent exploring the relationship that exists, if any, between a teacher's experiences and how they approached teaching about a global issue. Building perspective consciousness—a key component of global mindedness (Hanvey, 1976)—means going beyond the surface of one's opinion to better understand the intersecting influences that makeup one's view of the world. The extent to which a teacher's cultural, historical, political, and educational background influenced their decision making when teaching about capitalism, colonization, citizenship, and other topics discussed above, was not fully investigated within this project. Future research that brings educators from around the world together through a virtual discussion forum would do well to ask participants to reflect on how their life experiences shape their global mindedness, the biases they still possess, and how these characteristics consciously and unconsciously influence what they choose to include and leave out of the curriculum. Research that uses on-line discussion forums to pursue these lines of inquiry would provide opportunities for participants to ask questions and pursue topics that can help them and others better understand the complexities of cultures, histories, places, and more so that educators can transfer this type of thinking and work on cross-cultural learning into their classroom.

The "6 C's" provide teachers and students with concepts and tools to analyze the messages encoded in any audio, video, or print text, while also ensuring students consider the importance of authorship and point of view analysis. The questions and resources provided can also be used to foster reflection by students on how influences that "emanate from multiple points in the global system" affect their sense of identity and citizenship, as well as how they imagine the organization of nations (Pike, 2000, p. 71). Further, this framework aids in the facilitating of critical thinking exercises that interrogate both the means ("scapes" and technologies) and the messages (codes and content) that continue to deterritorialize as well as define cultures. Global educators are right to use sources that allow people to speak for themselves because if "the strangeness of their ways [are to] become less strange" students need to develop a perspective consciousness that includes

“getting inside the heads of those strangers and looking out at the world through their eyes” (Hanvey, 1976, p. 165). Supporting students in the development of critical media literacy skills based in global education is essential to their ability to look beyond the arbitrary divisions used to organize the world. As we exist in an evermore interconnected and media saturated world, critical media literacy and global education are integral if students, as citizens, are to become responsible consumers and producers of information.

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