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Geographies of War and Peace

“Geography’s Pro Peace Agenda” was an interesting paper that touched on a lot of key social-political issues and helped me make connections between some of my other research interests, namely geographic pedagogy, educational equity, non-violent social radicalization, and even the Bitcoin & Sustainable Development project I am assisting with. This article illuminated a new (to me) perspective on the intersection of conservatism and higher education.

Within the United States (generally) completion of a post-secondary degree is strongly correlated with liberalism. While I have been thinking about the ways in which social institutions and pedagogy might either *cause* left-wing ideological beliefs or—both intentionally and inadvertently—*self-select* for them, i.e., constructing, reflecting, and reproducing the geography of academia. But knowing now the historical context and purpose of land-grant universities in the United States, I am re-thinking how education can, paradoxically, also drive political ideologies in the other direction. Additionally, it’s forcing me to re-contextualize my personal experiences in high school as the student-commander and gay man of a Junior ROTC program with openly and vocally anti-gay instructors (For context, I graduated before *Obergefell v. Hodges*). The complex intersections of identities, experiences, and geographies that come to form our ontological ideologies—which then reproduce and reinforce those same geographic landscapes—are critical to understanding and resolving both small and large-scale conflict, including nuclear warfare. It is particularly relevant here and today given the repeated actions of certain student groups to invite politically, and potentially violently, inciteful speakers to our campus.

Geography as a discipline is uniquely situated to handle these intersections because of its use and valuation of a pragmatic paradigm, utilizing and promoting both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and being more open to a variety of ontologies and epistemologies (relative to the physical and natural sciences). But the article is right that we must first deconstruct our pre-conceived notions and assumptions, and properly and unequivocally define and answer fundamental questions like: What is peace, and why should we strive for it? What ethical obligations do we have as university degree-holding citizens? Who is being excluded or driven-out of learning opportunities and thereby what forms of knowledge or ways of knowing are we missing?