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Chapter 3
Transnational Feminism

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INTRODUCTION

The late 20 century saw a global explosion of attention to women's rights. In 1975, the United Nations announced the United Nation's Decade for Women to raise awareness of international women's rights. Four world conferences were held between 1975 and 1985 during which women from all over the world gathered to discuss such issues as gender discrimination, violence against women, poverty, health, armed conflict, the economy, the rights of girls, and the environment. Since these initial meetings, research on global gender inequality has increased immensely. Of women worldwide 35% have experienced gendered violence in their lives (UN Women, 2014). Of all women who are employed, 50% work in vulnerable employment in the informal economy where there are no working regulations or protections for workers, such as sexual harassment policies and the range of other workplace protections from injury and exploitation that some take for granted (UN Women, 2014). There is now growing consensus around the world that mobilizing for gender equality is a global project for the 21 century as well.

Transnational feminism constitutes a framework that can be used to address the challenges of working toward gender equality globally. Transnational feminism can be thought of as a two-pronged approach that analyzes shifts and changes in gender relations globally and builds feminist communities of resistance across and against borders. As a theoretical paradigm, transnational feminism examines how gender equality is manifested geographically (in various locations), and also traces historical structures of inequality.

Transnational feminism is specifically concerned with how colonialism and imperialism map onto current forms of global gender inequality. According to Ania Loomba (2005), colonialism can be defined as "conquest and control of other people's lands and goods" (p. 8). It may include the direct or indirect control of land and people by foreign occupiers, and in some cases, the settling of foreign populations and the displacement of those indigenous to the land (for example, Canada). Imperialism can be understood as the cultural and economic dependency and control over people and land that ensures that labour and markets are opened to imperial powers (p. 11). Transnational feminists work from the assumption that colonial and imperial projects have and continue to alter gender relations in significant ways that intersect with issues of health, poverty, the economy, and the environment (for more on colonialism and imperialism, please refer to chapter 2). They also acknowledge that colonial and imperial projects have an impact on how these

global issues are represented and discussed in feminist scholarship. Transnational feminists contend that current imperial projects, including dominant forms of economic globalization, affect women's lives and the ways in which feminists can align themselves in acts of global solidarity against systems of oppression.

This chapter offers an introduction to transnational feminist theories and activisms. First, this chapter will explain the concept of "transnational" by distinguishing transnational feminism from the terms "global" and "international" feminism. Second, this chapter will explore the differences between "global feminism" and transnational feminism. Third, the chapter will outline three issues of global significance where transnational feminists have made specific interventions: migration, representation of global women's issues, and violence against women. Fourth, feminist mobilizations across borders will be explored. By working through these key questions and issues, this chapter focuses on how power operates transnationally and how—with both successes and failures—transnational feminists are organizing and agitating for gender equality across borders.

GLOBALIZATION, LOCAL/GLOBAL, AND THE TRANSNATIONAL

Globalization is a highly contested term and yet an essential one for transnational feminists.[1] Globalization can be described as the increased movement and flows of peoples, information, and consumer culture across borders (Naples, 2002, p. 8). For many, the term globalization might conjure images of the United States' companies such as McDonald's opening in Tanzania and Starbucks serving its coffee in Shanghai. The term might also evoke images of people crossing borders for holiday travel, of bananas from Latin America being imported into Canada, and of receiving cold calls from a United States' company that has outsourced its work to India. The term globalization appeals to people's optimistic visions of an interconnected world, where national identities and borders are becoming less important to the ways in which individuals move and interact, the services and goods people can access, and how companies do business. The largest corporations in the world, including Nestlé and Shell, are called multinational corporations (MNCs) or transnational corporations, meaning that these companies spread their work around the world, which is facilitated by processes of globalization.

Importantly, globalization has winners and losers. Critics of globalization say the costs outweigh the benefits since the benefits are not equally distributed. For Marchand and Runyan (2011), the term "globalization" is coded language that gives a positive spin on projects and processes that are actually imperialist in nature. They use the term "globalization-cum-imperialism" to denote the ways in which the term globalization masks the powerful forces behind changes in economies and cultures that create conditions in which some win and some loose. For example, while goods may flow across national borders more frequently, these flows are unequal in their volume and the profits are not shared in equitable portions with producers. For example, many Northern governments are known to subsidize domestic farmers in their agro-industries. Government subsidies, or

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small amounts of money distributed in various ways to local producers, allow domestic farmers to sell their goods on the global economy at lower costs. These cheaper goods can then flood Southern markets and push domestic farmers in poorer countries out of business because they were produced at a much lower cost by the original producer. This situation likely means that a Jamaican farmer is more vulnerable to unemployment while a farmer in the United States can be more assured of a market for her product, due to the ways that food production is now globally orchestrated.

Globalization has shifted cultures, social interactions, political structures, and national economies. Taken together, the complex processes of globalization have resulted in jobs for women opening up worldwide. Unfortunately, the most under-paid, under-valued, and exploitative jobs seem to be designated for women. A feature of current forms of globalization is that it is highly gendered, in that many women around the world, who are formally employed, work in export manufacturing and/or must migrate for work and leave their families behind. Feminist scholars use the term "feminization of labour" to mark this shift in the global economy. The pressure to reorient national economies to manufacture for export has feminized the global labour force. International financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, often require poorer countries to gain capital through a reorientation of their economies for the export of goods and services. Low wages are attractive to investors in export-oriented economies because more profit can be derived if lower wages are paid. Given that many export-dependent countries are located in the Southern Hemisphere, these economic advantages come through the increasing exploitation of racialized women as the employees of choice in manufacturing and low-paid service and informal economies. The stereotype of nimble-fingered, inherently docile, and hardworking Third-World[2] women is used to justify their suitability for repetitive and monotonous work (Bergeron, 2006; Eisenstein, 2009; Erevelles, 2006; Fernandez-Kelly, 1983).

For feminists concerned with the negative impact of globalization on gender relations and on women in particular, globalization is neither inevitable nor unchanging, but rather a project shaped by social and political forces. In other words, globalization is a process, and therefore, it can be resisted. Marchand and Runyan (2011) find the term "global economic restructuring" a more accurate and effective one to describe the project of globalization-cum-imperialism. This process generally includes the dismantling of nationally funded social services and health care in favour of putting these services into an open market for private sector companies to own, deliver, and profit from. By seeing globalization through the lens of economic restructuring, the gendered impacts are more visible for study and can be challenged. For example, a major impact of globalization has been the increase in women's unpaid labour. Women do about 70% of the household work globally (Desai, 2002). Due to global economic restructuring, women are doing more unpaid care work than ever before. When countries liberalize their economies, many state supports for reproductive labour are effectively removed and women end up picking up the slack. Feminists have termed this the "double-burden" or "triple-burden" of labour where they perform not only paid work in the market and unpaid work for their families, but also the caregiving and domestic labour that might otherwise have been subsidized by the state. Among the impacts of global economic restructuring is also the increase in the price of

goods, including food, that makes women more vulnerable to malnutrition as they often eat last after providing for family members (Desai, 2002, p. 20).

Transnational feminists conceptualize global economic restructuring as a useful way of understanding global power systems and cultural flows—and as a starting point for enacting change. This way of thinking about globalization is important for transnational feminist theories because scholars are interested in mapping changing politics, cultures, and economies and contributing to positive change.

Transnational feminist theory invites people to think differently about how culture is also subject to globalizing forces. Globalization has not meant that cultures have become homogeneous nor has it meant that the flow of Western products, services, and ideas proceed uniformly from the West to other countries (Marchand & Runyan, 2011). Certainly, colonialism and imperialism shape the ways in which culture and capital flow, and it is important for transnational feminists to map how this happens as well as to note resistance to it. One way to think about how culture flows unpredictably under globalization is to take the example of the Mattel toy, the Barbie doll. In their canonical text *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, Grewal and Kaplan (1994) use the example of the consumption of Barbie in India to describe the globalization of culture. Challenging the assumption that cultural flows are unidirectional (i.e., from the West to "the rest"), Grewal and Kaplan ask where, by whom, and for what reason some elements of culture are consumed and not others. Since Barbie is sold in India dressed in a sari while Ken is dressed in "American" clothes, some American culture is being consumed, but India's culture is also changing Barbie. Grewal and Kaplan ask that people think about what a Barbie dressed in a sari might communicate about the interplay between the global and the local, suggesting that although an American multinational corporation can impose culture, so can the recipient influence its production to a certain extent.

More than Barbie's dress, Grewal (2005) notes that most Barbie dolls sold in the United States in the 1990s were made in China, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The plastics of the doll were made in Taiwan from oil bought from Saudi Arabia. Her hair was made in Japan and the packaging was made in the United States. According to Grewal, the labour cost associated with Barbie was about 35 cents per Barbie and the labour was performed primarily by poorly paid Asian women in assembly line work. Most of the cost of Barbie is associated with shipping, marketing, and profit for Mattel. The example of Barbie demonstrates that the globalized production and consumption of Barbie is multidirectional and gendered in both labour and consumption. It also shows that the poor, Southern nations are positioned as sites of resources for the West where captive labour and markets are opened to Western powers through the project of globalization-cum-imperialism.

Local/Global

Transnational feminists are particularly concerned with the terms "local" and "global." Global is often used to denote the workings of globalization at a level that is supra-national, or transgresses state borders. You may have heard the phrase "think global, act

local," which promotes resistance to globalization. Resisting the harmful effects of global-ization has involved taking local action, such as purchasing food at farmer's markets or checking the labels on clothing to ensure it has been traded fairly. These are complex consumer practices, and transnational feminists help us understand that the local and the global are not two distinct entities; instead, they are mutually constitutive spaces that cannot be separated (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). In other words, the local and global are two interconnected aspects of the same phenomenon.

The division between thinking globally and acting locally makes little sense to many people who are already integrated into structures of globalization in their locality. For example, in 2013, a garment factory (Rana Plaza) in Bangladesh collapsed killing over 1000 people and injuring thousands of others (BBC, 2013; Uddin, 2013). Although a crack in the building was known to be dangerous, workers were encouraged to return to work after being evacuated a few days before the collapse. Over 4 million people work in clothing factories in Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 85% of the workers are women and over four-fifths of its $20 billion in production is sent to the West (NBC News, 2013; The Guardian, 2013). The collapsed Rana Plaza building paints a disastrous but informative example of the interplay between local, national, and global events. Indeed, the Rana Plaza buildings were due for upgrades and structural renovations that were put off by the local companies overseeing the manufacturing of garments. Afterwards, numerous local people were arrested on charges of negligence. Nationally, the government of Bangladesh closed 18 other factories due to safety issues (BBC, 2013). Transnationally, activists called for boycotts of multinational corporations working in Bangladesh, such as The Gap and Canadian retailer Joe Fresh. Since the collapse of Rana Plaza, almost 200 transnational garment retailers have signed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (2013). This disaster, and the response to it, involves global economic systems, multinational corporations, national policies and legislation, local and global patriarchies (especially since most precarious work in this industry is done by women), historical forms of colonialism, imperialism, and consumer culture in the West. For transnational feminists, the collapse of Rana Plaza and the response to its collapse are indeed *transnational* since they cannot be made sense of without an understanding that the local and global are interconnected.

Transnational

According to Swarr and Nagar (2010), transnational feminist theory has grown out of two interconnected dialogues in the field of feminist studies: first, it has been employed by those seeking to question globalization and neo-liberalism, and to underscore social justice issues, including the creation of alliances across borders; and second, it has been used in feminist debates about Eurocentrism since the 1980s in feminist theory and writing, espe-cially regarding issues of how stories of Other women lives (including questions of voice, authority, identity, and representation) cross borders. But the very meaning of the term

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transnational is contested among scholars in the fields of postcolonial, Third World, and international feminisms. Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, and J. T. Way (2008) suggest that transnationalism is an overused term, taking on very different meanings in multiple disciplines (p. 625). For example, the term transnational can indicate migratory processes and capital circulations, or transnational flows of people and goods. The term is sometimes used to signal the apparent powerlessness of the state to control trade and flows of people across its own borders. The term is also used to describe the world as borderless and inter-connected. In fact, in the post–9/11 period especially, borders are very real and worthy of attention. Since passengers on commercial airlines attacked the New York World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the way in which individuals cross some borders has changed dramatically. Some argue that in contrast to opening, borders are more entrenched and closed to some people than ever, and yet more open to capital. As Walia (2013) writes: "Capital, and the transnationalization of its production and consumption, is freely mobile across borders, while the people displaced as a consequence of the ravages of neoliberalism and imperialism are constructed as demographic threats and experience limited mobility" (p. 4). Border crossings, and our varied experiences with crossing borders based on gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and citizenship status, can tell us how borders continue to mat-ter under globalization. Feminist interpretations of the transnational that do not take bor-ders, boundaries, and inequalities seriously risk hollowing out the concept. So rather than abandoning the term on account of its multiple and often conflicting usages, the term allows its users to challenge the flattening of power relations between states.

The use of the term "transnational," instead of "international" or "global," marks some feminist theorists' refusal to valorize inequitable global systems. International usu-ally refers to relations *between* nations. Transnational does a better job of getting at the social, economic, cultural, and political flows that *transcend* the boundaries of the nation-state (Mann, 2012, p. 356). Karen Booth (1998) suggests that the term international denotes Western power systems founded by global inequalities, including the United Nations. As Radika Mongia (2007) argues, the term "international" denotes equality between nations and does not take into account the power differentials between nations. Nor, I would add, can it adequately acknowledge cases where multiple nations (some acknowledged, some unacknowledged) may exist within a single state, as in the case of many Indigenous nations. Using an anti-colonial analysis, she argues that the term inter-national does not allow scholars to take into account the way in which nation-states are "co-produced through a complex array of related and relational historical events" (p. 384). Mongia (2007) sheds light on the inadequacy of the term international by exploring the work of the United Nations. At the United Nations (UN) only recognized sovereign nations can negotiate with other nations that are understood to be "equivalent" to one another. The UN and its many agencies, as an example of the "international," have a membership of only recognized sovereign nation-states. The functioning of the UN ahistoricizes the uneven co-production of nations in the post–Second World War period. Importantly, many former colonies and occupied territories were not sovereign at the time that the United Nations was established and could not obtain membership. Significantly,

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the UN Security Council is an unequal space where the United States has the power of a veto vote, and where the Western world holds the most power (Mongia, 2007, p. 410).

For many transnational feminists, the term "transnational" is also a corrective term for the "global" in some feminist studies. According to Naples (2002), the term "transnational" intertwines the global and the local and pays attention to the interplay between both sites, paying specific attention to how power operates within and between nations, and among and between women. "Global," on the other hand, has come to represent theorizing and political organizing that assumes natural and inevitable solidarities among women globally. For transnational feminists Grewal and Kaplan, "global feminism has elided the diversity of women's agency in favor of a universalized Western model of women's liberation that celebrates individuality and modernity" (1994, p. 17). In other words, global feminism has come to represent a kind of theorizing and organizing among feminists that presents Western women as more advanced, modern, and liberated than their Third World sisters, and enables them to "save" their sisters from backward, patriarchal, and traditional men. Post-colonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) coined the phrase, "White men saving brown women from brown men" to describe the ways in which Third World women are too often positioned in Western scholarship as agentless and waiting to be rescued. While the term "global" is not always understood so negatively, transnational feminists have chosen the word "transnational" to repair what they see as the failures and shortcoming of global feminism, as discussed below.

To review, while a variety of scholars use the terms global, international, and transnational in many different ways, transnational feminists use the term transnational because they find it useful for feminist theorizing and organizing across and against borders, and for understanding globalization. Importantly, transnational feminist theorists continually reflect on the term transnational itself, especially its usage, and what it communicates.

GLOBAL FEMINISM AND TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM: KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE

Transnational feminism is often conceptualized as an alternative to global feminism, and has come to dominate Western feminist interventions into issues related to globalization. In 1984, Robin Morgan published *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology*. Morgan envisioned a global sisterhood as a network of women from around the world, working together to address women's issues. While this text is not representative of all global feminist theorizing, and Morgan is not the only scholar I might cite here, this book demonstrates the most problematic aspects of global feminism that transnational feminists aim to address. In the text, Morgan suggests that because women from many countries around the world contributed to the anthology, it represents the state of women's issues globally. Significantly, each chapter is devoted to women's issues in different countries but there is little analysis of the connections and power differentials between women and countries. The anthology implies that if feminists know more about women's

issues nation by nation, they can see that women around the world have connections to one another on the basis of their shared experiences under patriarchy. Learning about experiences of oppression other than your own is clearly a very desirable political goal, but Morgan, as the anthology editor, invited certain women to publish in the text and had control over the publishing of the anthology. A Western feminist, she collected and controlled women's stories for the anthology and provided the language of sisterhood to bring the chapters together, thus allowing it to be framed through a Western lens. This is significant because transnational feminists not only question what stories about Other women are being told, but who has the power to tell these stories.

Transnational feminists are concerned with how stories are told. According to Chandra T. Mohanty (2003), academic curricula—including the very text you are reading—"tell[s] a story—or tells many stories" (p. 238). As already explored in this chapter, how feminists think about the local and the global, and think about, or do not think about, the connection between these two sites, matters. In the classroom, these stories matter as much as academic research on globalization. In her chapter "Under Western Eyes Revisited" from *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Chandra T. Mohanty (2003) criticizes the process of "internationalizing" the gender and women's studies curriculum (p. 238). As demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, globalization, or what Marchand and Runyan (2011) call "global economic restructuring," has had a negative impact on women's lives transnationally. In the 1980s, gender and women's studies programs in the United States and Canada shifted their focus from centralizing North America to examining the impact on women of globalization. While the geographical focus of many classrooms changed during this period, global feminism often dominated studies of global women's issues.

The "internationalizing" of gender and women's studies curricula has often meant a narrow focus on a set of topics including garment export factories and female genital mutilation, and a destabilization of dominant subject positions, but through inclusion frameworks that stabilize almost everything else (Fernandez, 2013). This restricted outlook in feminist classrooms reflects some of the most troubling aspects of global feminism according to transnational feminists. Global feminist scholarship on the body and sexuality, and specifically on what in the West is commonly described as "female genital mutilation," is routinely embedded in what Grewal and Kaplan (2001) call "the binary axis of tradition-modern" (p. 669). In other words, scholarship on this subject habitually produces "traditional" subjects that are agentless in a backward culture in order to establish more "modern" Western subjects. For the authors, "the global feminist is one who has free choice over her body and a complete and intact, rather than a fragmented or surgically altered body, while the traditional female subject of patriarchy is forcibly altered . . . and deprived of choices or agency"(Grewal & Kaplan, 2001, pp. 669–670).

Mohanty's (2003) and Fernadez's (2013) analyses about how feminists teach and learn about Other women is a central feature of transnational feminism.[3] As a way of decolonizing curriculum, Mohanty offers a "comparative feminist studies" or "feminist solidarity" model for the classroom. To understand why this model is most successful for teaching and learning through a transnational feminist lens, it is important to first explore two less nuanced

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pedagogical models that are based on the premise that the student of gender and women's studies is universally white, middle class, and Western. What Mohanty calls the "Feminist as Tourist Model" involves "forays into non-Euro-American cultures" and showcases particularly sexist practices in those cultures. In this global feminist approach, students are encouraged to metaphorically travel around the world and learn how patriarchal, misogynist, and backward Other cultures are when compared with their own. In this model, it becomes the "white women's burden" to liberate her 'sisters' from oppression (Mohanty, 2003, p. 239). Difference and distance between women in the West and the "Third World" are solidified, and Western women confirm themselves as powerful, modern, and progressive. A second pedagogical model is the "Feminist as Explorer Model," wherein Other women are both the object and subject of knowledge, and the entire curriculum is devoted to countries other than the one in which the classroom is located. For example, a class using this model would teach about Latin America and Latin American women, but would not discuss the connections between where students are located and the places and people they are studying. This pedagogical strategy "internationalizes" the curriculum by emphasizing "distance from home" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 240).

Transnational feminist teaching practices suggest instead that a learning and teaching model based of feminist solidarity is desirable. Beginning from the premise that the local and global are defined as interconnected, rather than separate geographical territories, means that curriculum can help students discuss commonalities and difference among and between women. This pedagogical strategy also foregrounds the women's and gender studies classroom as a possible site for transnational solidarity and creates a space for teacher activism—by centring mutual responsibility to ending transnational oppressions, defining what Mohanty (2003) calls "common interests" around which feminists? globally can rally, and anchoring action in solidarity (and not saving, as is often the goal of global feminist curriculum).

The difference between global and transnational feminism might be best understood by looking at scholarship and claims for women's rights during the so-called War on Terror. In the aftermath of the attack on the New York World Trade Center, global feminism has been particularly occupied with the "binary axis of traditional-modern" that Grewal and Kaplan (2001) identify. Some Western feminists have concerned themselves with the alleged subordination of women under Islamic laws and governance, focusing specifically on women's bodily autonomy and even more specifically on veiling practices. Using the hijab, burqa, and niqab as a stand-in for nuanced analyses of women's lives, and specifically their religious and cultural practices, some Western feminists claim that "Eastern" women are pawns in a grand patriarchal scheme. Muslim women, especially those who wear the hijab, burqa, and niqab, are used as symbols for the cultural backwardness, social conservatism, and extremism of Islamic fundamentalism of the "East."

Jennifer Fluri (2009) uses the term "corporal modernity" to describe the ways in which the visibility of the female body has become a yardstick to measure a nation's level of modernity or "progress" in the post–9/11 era. She critiques the association of visibility of the female body with power, suggesting instead that lack of cultural and historical context ignores the ways in which the War on Terror has provided a political context for using the

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body and its coverings or lack thereof as a measure of liberation. In other words, women living in cultures that glorify the uncovering of the body are considered progressive, while those that support the covering of the body are regressive. This is a problematic and over-simplified formula for understanding gendered relations of power and women's agency. Fluri's work can be read as a criticism of global feminism's inattention to geography and history, and the lack of attention paid to the interplay between "home" and "abroad." Fluri and other scholars including Mahmood (2005), Thobani (2007), and Moallem (2005) maintain that what some Western feminists ignore is that the burqa and other veiling practices provide corporeal privacy in public space, and have allowed women to resist public patriarchal structures in their lives. Isolating veiling practices as symbolic of oppression does not accurately trace the cultural and political changes that lead women to wear, or take off, burqas, niqabs, and hijabs. Ignoring contextual analyses and the voices of Muslim women, global feminists have overwhelmingly argued that Muslim women are forced to act against their own human agency, or the innate sense of individual autonomy and desire for freedom against the weight of custom and tradition. Muslim women in this strand of global feminist theorizing are thought of as living with false consciousness or internalized patriarchy, and in need of saving by their liberated Western sisters (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Razack, 2008).

What is also missing from this global feminist discourse is an acknowledgment of the United States' role in women's loss of freedom in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan—a regime they supported during the Soviet occupation of the 1980s. In feminist rescue narratives, no mention is made of the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) that was established in 1977 and remains active in promoting human rights, health care, education, and democratic and secular rule in Afghanistan (Naples, 2002, p. 267). Instead, by employing the "traditional-modern binary axis," global feminist scholarship assumes that women are waiting to be saved (Grewal & Kaplan, 2001).

Given that transnational feminism is often presented as a reparative theoretical framework for "previous" feminisms (including global feminism), it is important to acknowledge the limits of this framework. While transnational feminist theory emerged out of theories from women of colour feminisms, third world feminisms, multicultural feminisms, and international feminisms, a variety of deployments of transnational feminism both continue and depart from these political and intellectual histories. Transnational feminist theorists often reflect on the field, how the term "transnational" is deployed, and the kinds of analyses and activism that the term transnational makes possible. As Swarr and Nagar (2010) maintain, transnational feminism is an unstable field that is critical of its own definitions and practices. Desai, Bouchard, and Detournay (2011) offer one such critique. They suggest that transnational feminism "is often seen to subsume women of color feminism" (p. 49). As explored briefly in Chapter 2, transnational feminism pays attention to the role of race, class, gender, and sexuality beyond the confines of the state borders. However, transnational feminists note that it is incorrect to assume that transnational feminism resolves racism and/or transcends the contributions of critical race or postcolonial feminisms. Some argue that transnational feminism removes the emphasis on race altogether. This critique has led scholars, including Adrien K. Wing (2000) to claim their

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work as "transnational critical race feminism" as a way to ensure that their scholarship is read and located within critical race *and* transnational feminist theoretical traditions.

Although the field is too broad to outline extensively here, this chapter turns now to sketch three focal issues of transnational feminism: migration, representation, and violence against women.

MIGRATION

The movements of culture, capital, and people under globalization are contradictory and complex. The tension between opening borders for the flows of global capital and culture and the desire of states to protect their borders from immigration is a major concern (Harvey, 2003; Walia, 2013). For transnational feminists, the increasing security measures at borders, especially in the post–9/11 period, is a concern. They argue that there are racist and imperialist dimensions to border security and control of individuals' movements, and a lack of justice-based responses to the effects of globalization (Magnet, 2011; Puar, 2007; Walia, 2013). While border crossings may be increasingly restricted by Western states, globalization simultaneously displaces people from poorer Southern regions due to instability, violence, and poverty. Migration has been and will likely continue to be a survival strategy for many.

"Care work" provides a good example of the ways in which migration is gendered and racialized. Care work is labour that is reproductive in nature, namely childrearing, elder care, and home care. One of the impacts of global economic restructuring has been the movement of women into the global workforce. These movements have resulted in a "crisis of care" that affects women around the world in different ways. In poorer Southern countries, global economic restructuring has pushed women into the workforce, and in the Western world, more women are working than ever before. While this represents increased economic independence for women, household duties have not been redistributed among members. In her foundational work, Arlie Hochschild (1989) found that women in the United States were working, on average, a full extra month above and beyond their productive duties. Calling this phenomenon the "second shift," Hochschild showed that unequal distribution of workload within households falls on women, or their community and family networks. When women are unable to work this "second shift," households seek employees to do this work for them. Families often hire low-paid child-care, home-care, and elder-care workers who are often un-unionized and have very few working rights and protections. Many women, in addition to taking care of their own children, provide child care for other families in their own homes because child care is un- or under-subsidized. Since most child care occurs within private homes, this issue remains a "private" issue and is considered a woman's personal responsibility. In Canada, this idea is reinforced by the fact that the Canada Revenue Agency (2015) provides a meagre universal child care benefit to individual families so they can choose their own child care options, rather than subsidize public child care across the country.

Global economic restructuring in the United States and Canada shapes the transnational migration patterns of women. Welfare state retrenchment in both countries

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means most families lack an adequate social safety net. In the United States, there is no guarantee of paid maternity or paternity leave, no public child care, and no universal health care system. In Canada, women working in the most precarious, piecemeal labour do not qualify for paid maternity leave, while paternity leave is often less valued, and women spend upwards of 30% of their annual income on publically available child care due to the lack of subsidized child care nationally (with the exception of the province of Quebec) (Macdonald & Friendly, 2014). Under increasing pressure from work and household-related needs, middle-class families have the option of hiring migrant workers to care for their children, especially relatively inexpensive live-in caregivers provided through the Canadian government's Live-in Caregiver Program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014).

Some families in economies like those of Canada and the United States find that public child care is too expensive, and they can only afford to hire private caregivers as long as they are inexpensive. Less privileged women from the poorer Southern nations are called on to fill this gap. Migration, according to Marchand and Runyan (2011), is "fashioned as the solution to child-care, eldercare, and healthcare crises in the North and un- and- under employment in the South" (p. 14). Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) use the phrase "global care chain" to denote the migration of women from poor, developing countries to developed ones as maids and nannies. Many countries, due to global economic restructuring and national debts, depend on remittances as a way to further develop their own economies (Rodriquez, 2008). Remittances are monetary transfers from foreign workers to their home country. For example, the Philippine state relies on the export of labour through national migration apparatuses. As Rodriquez (2008) suggests, "brokering workers" in this way ensures remittances; women who leave poorer countries for richer ones, as caregivers, send money home to their families, especially to their own children and to bolster their nation's economy. However, this leaves a major care gap in their home nations and households.

As I alluded to, the global care chain is not an informal network of gendered and racialized labour. Rather, governments in the West are responding to the known crisis of care by investing in transnational recruitment of women as maids and nannies. Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) call this the "female underside of globalization," where women in poorer countries migrate to do what is considered women's work in richer countries. The state is involved in this aspect of migration as governments, such as in the Philippines, for example, train women for "women's work" outside of the country, which includes training to conform to norms of gender and sexuality (Rodriquez, 2008). While care work is available transnationally, poorer nations must promote and market their women as the best in the field, and often the cheapest, to compete on a global scale. For Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003), the international division of labour is about more than reproductive labour such as caring for infants and children. In fact, they claim that *feelings* are "distributive resources" (p. 23). In other words, migrant domestic workers also engage in emotional labour. Similar to women workers in export processing zones who are expected to perform a "docile and dexterous" femininity along the global assembly line, nannies and maids are expected to perform femininity by nurturing and acting lovingly.

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REPRESENTATION

Transnational feminists emphasize the study of representation as a key site of feminist thought and activism. As Swarr and Nagar (2010) remind us, transnational feminism is a theoretical framework that intervenes in feminist debates about the issues of how stories of Other women's lives cross borders. Transnational feminists concerned with representation are particularly interested in questions of voice, authority, and identity since Western feminists are often telling stories of Other women's lives in their scholarship and in classrooms. They borrow from cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall (2013) and agree that studying representation is about understanding how "the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions that we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, and the values we place on them" give meaning to things (Hall, 2013, p. xix). To study the "production and circulation of meaning" of text, talk, and images about global women's issues, and more specifically Third World women, is important, particularly as certain types of research and media coverage may have harmful results. As such, they understand the study and use of representation as a very useful political strategy to effect change as well as an important practice in and of itself.

Decolonizing Feminist Thought

First published in 1984, Chandra Talpade Mohanty's canonical "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Discourses" critiqued Western feminist scholarship as misrepresenting Other women. In 2003, Mohanty republished the essay in her book *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* and re-visited the original article to respond to the huge scholarly attention it had received. This text is now considered a "signal piece" in transforming the global frameworks of many United States feminists (Mann, 2012, p. 365). Mohanty's aim was to deconstruct United States feminist discourses, although it has been taken up in many other contexts. In other words, she was concerned with how Other women's stories were being represented in United States scholarship. She was particularly concerned with what she called the "third world woman" who appeared in most texts as a "singular monolithic subject" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 372). To use Mohanty's term, Third World women are often presented as part of a coherent group with similar interests and desires, regardless of their class, ethnic, or racial location. While marginal in the academy, Mohanty (2003) argues that feminist theory has "political effects and implications beyond the immediate feminist or disciplinary audience" (p. 21). She therefore challenges the way in which Third World women have historically been represented in Western feminist scholarship as homogeneously oppressed. Mohanty argues that representing Third World women as lacking agency is ineffectual for designing strategies to combat oppression globally.

Transnational feminist scholars concerned with representation attend to the kinds of language, storytelling practices, and images that circulate in a variety of areas. These

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include feminist scholarship, as well as popular media, humanitarian and international development campaigns, and global feminist activisms. As Mohanty maintains in "Under Western Eyes," Western feminist scholarship too often engages in representational practices that collapse differences between Third World women and erase their agency. In particular, she argues that women's experiences of oppression in specific contexts are erased in favour of more simplistic renderings of their lives. She terms this overused representational practice "third world difference." Here, Western women are represented as secular, modern, and in control of their bodies and lives in contrast to Third World women who are represented as traditional, backward, and oppressed by patriarchal culture and violent men. Third World women are rarely represented as resisting oppression from multiple levels and sites of power, and it is often traditional and patriarchal culture (embodied by men) that stands in for women's subordination, rather than deep analysis of global structures of power.

Mohanty is also concerned with how this category of Third World women allows Western feminists to assume expertise in Third World women's issues. Often, feminist scholars assume that all Third World women have common experiences, problems, and needs, and so, they must have similar goals. Western feminist scholarship needs to be historically specific and take into account the differences between Third World women and the concrete reality of their lives. She writes: "These arguments are not just against generalization as much as they are for careful, historically specific generalizations responsive to complex realties" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 377). For Mohanty, the first prong of a two-pronged project toward liberating all women from oppression globally is "deconstructing and dismantling" representations and the second is "building and constructing" new coalitions of feminists across borders (Mohanty, 2003, p. 17).

Decolonizing Feminist Research

As a response to what Mohanty calls colonized Western feminist discourses, transnational feminists aim to produce better, more accurate, and more ethical research. But Mohanty's call for careful, historically accurate representations that account for the differences among and between women and the realities of women's lives is difficult to produce. Some say that this caution has led to less cross-border research by feminists. Staeheli and Nagar (2002) argue that many Western feminists became overwhelmed with questions of representation, essentialisms, universalisms, power and privilege, and were at a loss when conducting fieldwork across borders. Richa Nagar (2003) charges that transnational feminist's focus on the study of representation at the expense of other types of empirical work has led to widening the gulf between Western academic theory and the "on-the-ground" priorities of Southern subjects (p. 359). In other words, Western feminists have become overly cautious of cross-border research, and this critical analysis of colonized representations has made many researchers anxious about how to tell Other women's stories. Briggs et al. (2008) claim that transnational feminist scholarship has the potential for transformative politics through "collaboration among academics and intellectuals

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located in publishing's First World (the United States and Europe, with access to international publics) and Third World (where knowledge, however erudite, seems to be of strictly "local" provenance)" (p. 44). This kind of collaboration would dramatically change the relationship of women to knowledge production across borders, and help to build solidarities among women while paying attention to power and privilege differentials.

One powerful quality of transnational feminism is the scholar's dedication to reflexivity. Feminist reflections have frequently revolved around questions of how feminists produce knowledge through research, how researchers can be accountable to those they study, and how to represent these stories ethically and within a social justice framework when academics publish their work. In the academy, researchers often use the "grassroots" or the "local" as sites of knowledge to be excavated. Transnational feminists complicate the term "grassroots" to constantly decolonize representations of women's issues transnationally. Naples (2002) argues that the idea of the grassroots is too often romanticized as a site where individuals are always resisting and never desiring or benefiting from globalization. The grassroots is also largely defined as a site for intervention by Western experts. For Priti Ramamurthy (2003), the grassroots is a site of both agency and contradiction. Using the term "perplexity," she maintains that desire, benefit, and resistance are all experienced by those who inhabit this site.

As Mohanty (2003) maintains, "testimonials, life stories and oral histories are a significant mode of remembering and recording experience and struggles" (p. 77). However, she warns that the current diversification of the Eurocentric canon by publishing culturally diverse stories—a marked academic trend—can contribute to an exoticization (the process of making something or someone seem different, alien, or Other) of "different" stories from women who write as "authentic truth-tellers." Thus, the mere presence of more writings from Other women within the academy does not mean a de-centring of knowledge production. The ways in which stories are shared, heard, read, and institutionally located are critical for scholarly interrogation. Mohanty argues that the point of transnational feminist praxis is not only to record Other women's stories in order to create cross-border connections. Rather, it is to take seriously how stories and memories are recorded, the way they are shared and read, and the way in which they are disseminated to a broad audience (2003, p. 78).

Sangtin Yatra/Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India (2006) outlines some of the problems and possibilities of cross-border collaborations between Third World grassroots activists and Western academics. With few exceptions, Nagar (2003) claims that there are very few tools to execute transnational feminist projects, and thus, she proposes collaborative border crossings. *SangtinYatra/Playing with Fire* is set in Uttar Pradesh, India. It involves workers of a non-governmental organization with the pseudonym Nari Samata Yojana (NSY) who came together to write about their experiences of their individual social locations and their work. The Sangtin Collective brought together eight community-based activists with Richa Nagar, a women's studies scholar from the University of Minnesota. The writers composed autobiographies about issues such as childhood, womanhood, and sexuality in an intersectional analysis of class, caste, regional inequalities, and gender (Mohanty, 2006).

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When the collective decided to publish their stories as *Sangtin Yatra* in India in 2004, the stories were braided together to avoid collapsing the stories into a singular narrative. The collective claims that the book represents a "blended but fractured 'we'" (Nagar, 2006, p. xxxiv). Nagar (2006) writes: "The chorus of nine voices does not remain constant throughout the book. As one speaks, the voice of the second or third suddenly blends in to give an entirely new and unique flavour to our music" (p. xxiv). Nagar (2006) notes that the process of sharing, braiding, and editing was often bitter and caused anger, suspicion, and conflict within the collective. The members assumed no shared experience of womanhood and "collectively crafted individual stories shaped through painful dialogue" (Mohanty, 2006, p. xiii). Working with and through difference was essential to the collective's success in producing a collection of individual but connected stories and to building solidarity with one another.

Sangtin Yatra is one example of transnational methodology that has aimed to disrupt dominant ways of coming to know about Other women. And yet, as Nagar (2006) claims, "no act of translation is without problems of voice, authority and representation and no act of publication comes without risk and consequences" (p. xxiii).

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Another issue that is often covered by transnational feminist research is violence against women. Globally, violence against women is a major problem. According to the United Nations' *In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women*, "violence against women persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality" (2006, p. 9). The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as: "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public life or in private life" (United Nations, 1993, n.p.).

In 2006, the UN Secretary-General launched an in-depth study on violence against women. According to the corresponding UN campaign entitled UNITE, violence against women is a universally unjustifiable crime that exists in every corner of the world. UNITE maintains that persistent discrimination against women lies at the root of the issue, and violence against women is unconfined to any culture, region, or country (UNITE, 2012). This in-depth study revealed that up to 70% of women globally experience violence in their lifetime. In Canada, a study of adolescents ages 15 to 19 found that 54% of girls had experienced "sexual coercion in a dating relationship" (UNITE, 2012). The United Nations includes forced marriages, human trafficking, dowry murders, and honour killings in its report on global violence against women. It also includes issues of violence against women in war and conflict situations. The United Nations reports that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, over 200 000 women have suffered from sexual violence during conflict. In Rwanda, between 250 000 and 500 000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide (UNITE, 2012).

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Globalization and Violence against Women

As noted at the outset of this chapter, globalization has meant an increase in women's paid employment in a range of sectors, including in the informal sector and in export manufacturing. Export processing zones (EPZ) are contradictory sites for women. While they may provide women with income, and perhaps more economic autonomy within the household, they are connected to violence against women in complicated ways. One of the most well-known EPZs is the *maquiladoras* of the borderlands between the United States and Mexico. The majority of maquiladora employees are young women. According to scholar Kathleen Staudt (2008), who studies EPZs near Ciudad Juarez, this city and women's work here are situated within a matrix of "femicide" (the killing of women).

The Mexican government's Programa industrial fronterizo (border industrialization program) was established in 1960 to facilitate foreign direct investment and global free trade regimes to be globally competitive and to develop. In 1994, Canada and the United States solidified the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico. One of many results of these two major trade programs is the growth of Ciudad Juarez, which has become home to hundreds of factories employing more than 200 000 workers, over half of them women (Staudt, 2008, p. 7). Although profitable for factory owners and investors, feminists have argued that the workers experience structural violence at the hands of "a global economy that has shrunk the real value of earnings in the export-processing economic development model that dominates in Juarez" (Staudt, 2008, pp. 7–8). Although there are more jobs in the city, they have come at a high price. On top of inadequate shelter, food, and wages, the fact that over 370 women have been murdered since 1993 within and around the EPZ has inflicted terror on the population (Staudt, 2008, p. x). While families of those missing, raped, and/or murdered in Juarez have rallied for justice, there has been little response nationally or internationally by governments, global institutions, or the development community. Serial killers and drug cartels are popular explanations among some scholars, and yet, violence within the home has simultaneously become commonplace. This suggests feminists should broaden their understanding of the systemic causes of violence in a community where gender conflicts have been sparked by changing patterns of labour for meager wages—all of which is couched in the heavily increased security of the United States and Mexican borders (Staudt, 2008, p. 143).

Since transnational feminists are interested in understanding the negative effects of global economic restructuring on women, they pay attention to the manifestations of violence. In particular, the example of violence in Ciudad Juarez connects the local and global since the violence experienced in the site is not one or the other, but rather connected to local manifestations of patriarchy, as well and transnational economic and political forces that are also deeply invested in maintaining these interlocking systems of oppression.

Representing Violence against Women

Given the pervasiveness of gender violence globally, violence against women is a crucial issue for feminists. Still, feminist scholars commonly misrepresent violence against Other women in problematic ways (Narayan, 1997). Uma Narayan, a self-identified Third World

feminist, has made foundational contributions to transnational feminism. Using the concept of "border crossing," Narayan suggests that information about dowry murders in India is shaped, distorted, and decontextualized when it crosses borders. The practice of dowry (transferring parental property to a daughter at the time of her marriage), and the violence associated with dowry (the abuse by husbands and in-laws related to this property exchange), is both complicated and changing, and yet, it is represented in Western contexts as a traditional and static practice that occurs regardless of class and caste. Narayan argues that only certain kinds of information about dowry and dowry-related violence is passed through a filter when it crosses borders, producing simple, quick facts and media-friendly sound bites. There is little coverage of violence against women in India in North American media, and dowry-related violence is rarely framed in terms of the general issue of domestic violence. This means that stories of dowry murder tend to cross borders with more frequency and currency than more complicated and nuanced reports of violence against women.

Narayan maintains that while dowry is a social, economic, political, religious, and cultural practice that varies over time and space, a "cultural explanation" is most often given when women experience violence related to this exchange (Narayan, 1997, p. 101). Western media's focus on widow/wife burning, and even on the dowry itself—a relatively lesser-known or misunderstood practice—as "alien," codes the practice as "Indian," and therefore Other. For Narayan, phenomena that seem "different," "alien," and "Other" cross borders with more regularity than do problems that seem to also affect so-called Western women. Unlike dating violence or domestic abuse, for example, dowry murders are misrepresented as foreign and unlike anything "at home" (Narayan, 1997, p. 102).

In Canada, popular discourse does not often represent violence against women as a cultural issue, even though the issue is systemic, as discussed further in Chapter 8. According to Statistics Canada (1993), half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence.[4] In Canada, approximately 1200 Indigenous women have been murdered or gone missing since 1999, and over 200 of these cases remain unsolved (RCMP, 2014). With the exception of Indigenous communities and anti-violence advocates, popular discourse has not framed the violence as an issue of Canadian culture. While systemic in nature and related to gender and racial inequality, media reports of violence against women use individualized explanations related to mental health, stress, alcohol and drug abuse, or provocation. While these explanations are problematic in their own right and are complicated by feminist theorizing on the issue, it is important to contrast this framing of the issue in Canada with "cultural explanations" offered in regard to violence against Indian women.

In all social justice organizing, certain issues are highlighted over others in order to mobilize attention and resources. In the case of dowry murders, the United States and Indian women's anti-violence movements focused their attention in asymmetrical ways, leading to Western feminists' over-emphasis of dowry deaths as *the issue* of Indian women. More recently Elora Halim Chowdhury (2011) has mapped the activism around, and transnational representation of, acid attacks in Bangladesh. Chowdhury describes the complicated relationship between anti-violence organizing in Bangladesh and the ways in which this issue is taken up transnationally. Borrowing from Elizabeth Friedman's (1999) phrase "transnationalism reversed," Chowdhury is specifically concerned with

local or grassroots organizing against acid attacks and its transnational affects. Similar to Narayan (1997), Chowdhury's (2011) extensive analysis points to the ways in which rhetoric around violence against women, including how violence is made visible and mobilized by activists in the locality, has global resonance. These scholarly works demonstrate how misrepresentations of violence against women create opportunities for feminist saviour narratives, but also feminist mobilizations across borders that are based on the misunderstanding that Western women need to save their sisters.

ACTIVISM AND SOLIDARITY

Transnational feminists examine the negative effects of globalization on women's lives while also taking account of women's resistances. While recognizing the limitations of resistances, transnational feminists explore the possibilities of generating transformative change through solidarity activism. Transnational feminists, as they seek solidarity practices, are particularly critical of global feminism's assumption that women are natural or inevitable sisters in struggle. Much transnational feminist literature considers how to collaborate and resist structures of oppression globally, while also recognizing the differences among women. Feminist scholarship on globalization has too often focused on global economic, social, and political change without taking into account the way in which women's daily lives are shaped by globalization—outside of women's labour force participation and the feminization of poverty in the Third World. Through providing various case studies of women organizing against local, national, and transnational forces, transnational feminist scholars aim to demonstrate the power of women's activism and the potential of transnational feminist practices, without romanticizing grassroots resistance. Transnational feminist scholars, including Grewal and Kaplan (1994), use transnational feminism both as a theoretical and activist framework that aims to avoid "the old sisterhood model of intervention and salvation that is clearly tied to older models of center-periphery relations" (p. 19). Yet, "old sisterhood models" continue to shape mobilizations of feminists globally, especially in response to violence against women as I offer in the final discussion.

SAVING OTHER WOMEN

In 2012, a 23-year-old female paramedic was gang raped by six men in a moving bus in South Delhi.[5] She died in a Singapore hospital two weeks later (*Times of India*, 2014). The gang rape received widespread coverage by international media; so much, in fact, that the phrase "the Indian gang rape" became a shorthand descriptor for the event. Importantly, this violent crime provoked discussion among anti-violence advocates and feminist scholars about how to intervene in a so-called culture of rape in India.

As feminist author and activist Jaclyn Friedman argued on TVO's current affairs program *The Agenda with Steve Paikin* (TVO, 2013), while individuals talk about "rape culture" in North America, popular discourse does not often include the phrase "culture of rape," and yet, this is the phrase circulated about India in light of the gang rape in 2012.

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These two terms are distinctive, and the difference is telling. When feminists speak and write about rape culture, they often refer to the ways in which sexual violence against women is explicitly and tacitly accepted in Western culture. This may include representations of violence in movies, jokes, and even colloquial ways of speaking (e.g., "I just raped that exam"). When feminists and others speak and write about "cultures of rape," as they did in the case of India following the 2012 gang rape, anti-violence advocates drew on stereotypes of Indian culture as inherently hyper-violent, misogynist, backward, and traditional. As in the discussion of dowry murder from earlier in this chapter, the 2012 gang rape that happened on a bus in South Delhi was given a cultural explanation.

In practice, cultural explanations of sexual or domestic violence do not allow for women to build solidarities transnationally. In the case of "the Indian gang rape" as it is ubiquitously known, a cultural explanation disallowed for connections to be made between North American and Indian women, in particular, about the different manifestation of gendered violence at a local level. As Mohanty (2003) articulates, solidarities among and between women require the mapping of power and difference, and an exploration of common interests. When "the Indian gang rape" was described as a cultural issue, many feminists in North America positioned themselves as saviours.

One of the most explicit examples of Western feminist attempts to "save their global sisters" comes from the Harvard College Women's Center when it announced a policy task force entitled "Beyond Gender Equality" just following the highly publicized rape and murder in South Delhi. The Harvardites presumed a stance of superior knowledge and, implicitly, culture, as they offered "recommendations to India and other South Asian countries." Understandably angered by the assumption that Indian feminists needed North American expertise, the following letter was written to the Harvard task force and published online on the blog *Kafila* by Nivedita Menon (2014):

> ## Letter from Indian feminists VRINDA GROVER, MARY E JOHN, KAVITA PANJABI, SHILPA PHADKE, SHWETA VACHANI, URVASHI BUTALIA and others, to their siblings at Harvard
>
> We're a group of Indian feminists and we are delighted to learn that the Harvard community—without doubt one of the most learned in the world—has seen fit to set up a Policy Task Force entitled 'Beyond Gender Equality' and that you are preparing to offer recommendations to India (and other South Asian countries) in the wake of the New Delhi gang rape and murder. Not since the days of Katherine Mayo have American women—and American feminists—felt such concern for their less privileged Third World sisters. Mayo's concern, at that time, was to ensure that the Indian State (then the colonial State) did not leave Indian women in the lurch, at the mercy of their men, and that it retained power and the rule of the just. Yours, we see, is to work towards ensuring that steps are

put in place that can help the Indian State in its implementation of the recommendations of the Justice Verma Committee, a responsibility the Indian State must take up. This is clearly something that we, Indian feminists and activists who have been involved in the women's movement here for several decades, are incapable of doing, and it was with a sense of overwhelming relief that we read of your intention to step into this breach.

You might be pleased to know that one of us, a lawyer who led the initiative to put pressure on the Justice Verma Committee to have a public hearing with women's groups, even said in relief, when she heard of your plans, that she would now go on holiday and take a plane ride to see the Everest. Indeed, we are all relieved, for now we know that our efforts will not have been in vain: the oral evidence provided by 82 activists and organizations to the Justice Verma Committee—and which we believe substantially contributed to the framing of their report—will now be in safe American hands!

Perhaps you are aware that the Indian State has put in place an Ordinance on Sexual Assault that ignores many recommendations of the Justice Verma Committee? If not, we would be pleased to furnish you a copy of the Ordinance, as well as a chart prepared by us, which details which recommendations have been accepted and which not. This may be useful in your efforts to advise our government. One of the greatest things about sisterhood is that it is so global, feminism has built such strong international connections—such that whenever our first world sisters see that we are incapable of dealing with problems in our countries, they immediately step in to help us out and provide us with much needed guidance and support. We are truly grateful for this.

Perhaps you will allow us to repay the favour, and next time President Obama wants to put in place legislation to do with abortion, or the Equal Rights Amendment, we can step in and help and, from our small bit of experience in these fields, recommend what the United States can do.

Vrinda Grover (mere lawyer)

Mary E. John, Senior Fellow, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi

Kavita Panjabi, Professor of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Shilpa Phadke, Assistant Professor, School of Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mubmai

Shweta Vachani, Senior Editor, Zubaan

Urvashi Butalia, Director, Zubaan

And many others.

Adding to the conversation, United States feminist scholar Carol Vance (2013) asks:

What lessons can be learned from feminist organizing and activism in India in the wake of the Delhi rape (especially since it could be said that feminist activism is much more vibrant and effective in India)? What reforms in law and its implementation are effective, given different legal systems and historical contexts? How do we understand the (relative) lack of response to horrific rapes in the US? (n.p.)

What this case demonstrates is how global solidarity cannot be assumed. Instead, global solidarity must be built through negotiations of power and difference across borders.

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It should go without saying that Third World women, to use Mohanty's (2003) term, are not waiting to be saved.

The United Nations As a Site for Advocacy

At the transnational level, the United Nations has provided a complicated venue for feminist organizing (Desai, 2005; Ferree & Tripp, 2006; Freeman, 1999). Since the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985), women have used the United Nations to gather and discuss women's issues around the globe. However, Manisha Desai's (2005) *Transnationalism: The Face of Feminist Politics Post-Beijing* questions whether the United Nations as a site of transnational feminist practice enables the latest incarnation of global feminism, or if such spaces allow for a transformative feminist politic.

Since the field of transnational feminism emerged in United States academic discourse, Western notions have played a heavy hand in shaping as well as describing transnational feminist movements (Desai, 2005). Desai explains how this comes to be a problem as she explores the United Nations Fourth Women's World Conference in Beijing. She explains that as sites of transnational feminist organizing "across national borders as well as framing local, national, regional and global activism [through] activist discourse" (p. 319), global conferences are still power-laden spaces, where structural resources and inequalities within and between countries in the First and Third World shape which feminist activists are able and allowed to participate. Using Desai's analysis, feminists might think of current forms of transnational activism as "globalization from the middle" since it is often middle-class, educated people who circulate from the academy to UN agencies to international NGOs (Waterman, 2000, as cited in Desai, 2005, p. 321). Since NGOs have to be registered as a credible party to participate in such conferences, there is an increasing depoliticization or de-radicalization of transnational feminist movements (Desai, 2005).

Additionally, critics of such practices suggest that transnational feminist movements are uneven, with many First World countries overrepresented and many Third World advocates uninvolved in collaborative efforts, though Southern NGOs often receive their funding from First World donors. Given the history of UN political manoeuvres outside of feminist initiatives, this tension should not be surprising. After all, many member states see UN forums as aiming to *develop* Third World countries—hardly a viable starting point for a transnational feminist exchange. As a result, transnational feminist movements tend to mirror previous forms of global feminism, where middle-class, educated women from the West see themselves as helping desperate, poor, marginalized Third World women, rather than seeking transformative gender justice (Desai, 2005).

Worker Solidarity

While criticizing global feminist saviour models and international organizing that remains inequitable, transnational feminism also provides a renewed hope in feminist organizing though solidarity movements. Transnational feminist scholars stress the myriad of ways that women who may never meet "can draw strength from each other and organize across

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differences" (Naples, 2002, p. 270). For example, Mohanty's (2003) chapter, "Women Workers and the Politics of Solidarity," in *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* sheds a positive light on transnational feminist organizing by underscoring solidarity through common interests rather than assume common experiences.

Solidarity organizing through common interests takes into account women's varied desires and needs while acknowledging women's social circumstances as workers. Both the Working Women's Forum (WWF) and the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India are examples of successful organizations of women workers. The Self Employed Women's Association was one of the first organizations to conceptualize women's informal work as work—that is, work done in the private or outside formal working regulations, including vegetable vending and producing goods from home. In 1972, SEWA unionized informal women workers and formed cooperatives to share resources. The women have formed support networks, trained community health workers, and established a SEWA university, where women are trained in production and managerial skills (Desai, 2002, p. 19). SEWA not only provides leadership training, but also has women's banks and producer cooperatives (Mohanty, 2003, pp. 164–65). By defining common interests, sites of power, and complicity, as well as the needs of Third World women as workers, SEWA provides a transformative basis for collective struggles (Mohanty, 2003).

In addition to mapping the negative effects of globalization, feminists are also concerned with mapping women's resistances to globalization, even if they may seem small. Scholars, including Fernandez-Kelly (1983) and Ong (1987), have traced resistances in workplaces by women organizing in solidarity. Although women surely have been exploited by labour conditions in EPZs, they have also been active resisters, engaging in work stoppages, resisting long hours without breaks, and using religious or cultural celebrations to refuse work and to organize workers in these areas (Ong, 1987; Fernandez-Kelly, 1983). These local actions have transnational effects, and can lead to larger transformative solidarity actions among workers (Mendez, 2002). For example, the Central American Network for Women in Solidarity with Women Workers in the Maquilas ("The Network") has utilized communication technologies to launch national and international campaigns pressuring factory owners to sign codes of ethics. Their media campaign, "Jobs, Yes . . . but with dignity," has helped to decrease what is known as shop-floor violence, and has in turn helped The Network to negotiate with factory owners to monitor conditions for workers. It is important to note that most of The Network's funding has come from non-governmental organizations in Northern countries. This means that The Network's activism is funded by, and therefore partly accountable to, Northern countries, which may affect how they do their work.

CONCLUSION

Transnational feminist theories aim to repair the failures and shortcomings of global feminism and the "internationalization" of gender and women's studies curriculum. Western feminism has too often homogenized all Third World women as an uncivilized Other, in

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need of empowerment and saving. For transnational feminists, representing women's issues within ongoing global economic restructuring, attending to the nuanced facets of women's lives, is necessary for cross-border coalitions. While global feminism tends to assume that women are natural and inevitable sisters in struggle against a universal form of patriarchy, transnational feminism uses a framework of analysis that emphasizes power and differences among women within the context of shifting global power relations, in addition to paying attention to gender inequalities within localities.

This chapter has outlined some of the major concerns for transnational feminists including the concept of globalization and flows of culture and capital; the mutually constitutive relationship, or the interplay, between the local and the global; the politics of representing the stories of "Third World women" in scholarship and in classrooms; collaborating across borders in research practices; migration and the international division of care labour; violence against women; and women's organizing. It is important to remember that transnational feminism is not a homogenous subfield of feminist theory with shared values, meaning, ideas, and languages (Swarr & Nagar, 2010, p. 3). Instead, transnational feminism is a diverse field of study in which theorists have intervened in a variety of questions pertaining to global women's issues. It is a field of inquiry into globalization and its effects, with no single, coherent position or strategy. As scholars remain reflexive and the flow of goods and cultures shift and transform, the field shifts and changes. As global economic restructuring continues to alter transnational systems of oppression, new opportunities for solidarity open up. Transnational feminists concerned with solidarity at the global level will continue to reframe their analyses of the world and women's place within it.

Endnotes

1. Watchel (2001) has collected over 450 definitions of the term (as cited in Desai, 2002, p. 15).

2. The term "Third World" originated during the Cold War, a conflict that occurred between capitalist and communist states after the Second World War. Countries that had been previously colonized by European or North American countries were constructed as a third world in reference to the inequalities between them. Third world countries may have found formal independence from colonial powers during this period but colonialization left profound disparities in wealth, capacity to compete in a globalizing economy, the health and life expectancy of populations, and the political status of these nations. The comparable wealth and status of "First World" countries, such as Canada, Great Britain, and the United States, led these types of countries to exercise a great deal of power globally. The "Second World" referred to the Communist countries (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Cuba, China, and others), although this term was only meant by implication, as it was with these countries that the United States and its allies were silently engaged in a major nuclear arms struggle. The term "Fourth World" has also emerged to refer to Indigenous societies that may be geographically and politically located in any of these countries. The term Third World has been problematized and also periodically reclaimed. Where Third World is used in this article, it appears as the language used by scholars under discussion.

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3. Put simply, to "other" someone is to distinguish "them" from "us." It is a process of demarcating difference, but also superiority and inferiority among groups of people. In this case, Other women are understood to be different and inferior to Western women.

4. Although more up-to-date data would be preferable, no Statistics Canada surveys since 1993 have asked women about their lifetime experience of violence.

5. In compliance with Indian law, the real name of the victim was initially not released to the media.

Discussion Questions

1. What are two major critiques of global feminism offered by transnational feminism? How are global feminist frameworks replicated in the classroom?

2. Manisha Desai suggests that at UN conferences first world delegates outnumber third world women. If there were more third world women at the table, would women's organizing at this forum be different? If so, how?

3. Since the events of September 11, 2001, how have Muslim women been represented by the popular and news media? How could you use a transnational feminist framework to challenge these portrayals?

4. The Canadian Live-in Caregiver program is controversial, with some transnational feminists claiming that the "global care chain" is exploitative. How might someone who is not a migrant worker advocate for this group in solidarity with them?

5. Taking into consideration the response of Indian anti-violence advocates to the Harvard Policy Task Force, how might transnational feminists concerned about global violence against women approach this issue differently?

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