BEYOND «HELPING» OR «NOT CARING ABOUT» *THEM*: TEACHING *WOMEN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES* AT AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY[1]

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Resumo

Para além de «ajudar» ou de «não querer saber» *delas*: ensinar «Women in Developing Countries» numa Universidade Americana

Este artigo constitui uma reflexão sobre os desafios a uma internacionalização do currículo de «Women Studies» nos Estados Unidos. Parte da minha experiência de ensino da disciplina de «Mulheres em Países em Desenvolvimento», na Universidade de São Francisco, uma universidade de Jesuítas com a missão expressa de promover a justiça social numa perspectiva global. Um dos maiores desafios colocados a este tipo de curso está no risco de o mesmo reforçar o etnocentrismo e o essencialismo, através da reprodução daquilo a que Chandra Mohanty chama «a diferença do Terceiro Mundo». Baseando-se no apelo de Mohanty a uma «solidariedade feminista não-colonizadora e transfronteiriça» e recorrendo à tipologia das formas de solidariedade, de Peter Waterman, o artigo discute as abordagens dos estudantes ao tema das «mulheres em países em desenvolvimento», bem como as formas de solidariedade assumidas ou implícitas nas teorias das mulheres/do género e do desenvolvimento/globalização referidas no curso.

Palavras-chave mulheres e desenvolvimento, teoria feminista, solidariedade feminista e pós-colonial, solidariedade internacional

Abstract

This essay is a reflection on the challenges for internationalizing the Women's Studies curriculum in the United States. It draws on my experience teaching «Women in Developing Countries» at the University of San Francisco, a Jesuit university with the stated mission of promoting social justice from a global perspective. One of the major challenges facing this type of course is the risk of reinforcing ethnocentrism and essentialism by reproducing what Chandra Mohanty calls the «Third World difference». Building on Mohanty's call for a «noncolonizing feminist solidarity across borders» and using Peter Waterman's typology of forms of solidarity, the essay discusses students' approaches to «women in developing countries» and the forms of solidarity assumed or implicitly promoted by the theories on women/gender and development/globalization covered in the course.

Key-words women and development, development, feminist theory, feminist and post-colonial solidarity, international solidarity

Résumé

Au-delà de «aider» ou «ne pas se préoccuper» avec *elles*: enseigner sur «Femmes aux pays en développement» dans une Université aux États-Unis

Cet article constitue une réflexion sur les défis posés par l'internationalisation du curriculum sur «Women Studies» aux États-Unis, concrètement, sur mon expérience d'enseigner sur «Femmes aux pays en développement» à l'Université de San Francisco, une université des pères jésuites, avec la mission explicite de promouvoir la justice social du point de vue global. Un des majeures défis d'enseigner ses matières consiste dans le risque de renforcer l'ethnocentrisme et l'essentialisme, reproduisant se que Chanda Mohanty appelle «La différence du Tiers-Monde». Ont reprendra l'appel de Mohanty a une «solidarité féministe non-colonisatrice et transfrontière», aussi bien que la typologie des formes de solidarité, de Peter Waterman, cherchant à débattre les approches des étudiants au thème des «Femmes aux pays en développement» et les formes de solidarités, conscientes ou implicites, présentes dans les théories sur les femmes/genre et développement/globalisation étudiées dans mes leçons.

Mots-clés femmes et développent, théorie féministe, féminisme et solidarité post-colonial, solidarité international

The triumph of neoliberal globalization since the early nineteen-nineties has generated a growing interest in international studies on the part of scholars in most, if not all, academic disciplines in the United States. Along with a plethora of new books on globalization from economic, political, sociological and cultural perspectives, there has been an increasing demand for «internationalizing» higher education curriculum in the United States. Like most departments and programs, Women's Studies programs have also gone «global». In fact, since the mid-1990s, Women's Studies programs have received support from private funding agencies, such as the Ford Foundation, to redesign and create new courses aimed at «internationalizing the study of women in the United States» (Rosenfelt, Lay, and Monk, 2002: 2). This new trend has opened up a unique opportunity to build a critical feminist curriculum bridging multiculturalism and internationalism, that is, a curriculum attentive to the intersectionality of gender, class, race and sexuality within globalized and interdependent local contexts[2].

Courses on women/gender and development/globalization might serve as a perfect model for combining multiculturalism and internationalism. Instructors in this field have questioned ethnocentrism; the centrality of the United States as the

model of political and economic development; as well as the prevailing stereotypes of women from developing countries as powerless victims of male domination and of American women as liberated individuals with unlimited and free choices (see, for example, the collection of articles in Lay, Monk, and Rosenfelt, 2002).

However, as Cynthia Wood notes, «courses on women and development do not necessarily promote student or faculty engagement with issues of diversity, and as generally taught may do just the opposite» (2002: 301). Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues further that, «the challenge for "internationalizing" women's studies is no different from the one involved in "racializing" women's studies in the 1980s, for very similar politics of knowledge come into play here» (2003: 517). One of the major challenges for these types of courses is how to approach commonality and difference without promoting essentialism and ethnocentrism. While the notion of commonality tends to universalize and essentialize gender (and/or race, class and sexuality) oppression, an emphasis on difference tends to create a dichotomous and monolithic conception of both «third world women/men» and «first world women/men», reproducing the superiority of the Western feminist subject by producing what Mohanty called in the mid-1980s the «Third World difference» (1991: 53).

Thus, we need to develop feminist pedagogies that might effectively engender critical knowledges about commonalities and differences within and across nations. Hopefully, these pedagogies will generate a «noncolonizing feminist solidarity across borders» (Mohanty, 2003: 503) or a «complex solidarity for a complex globality» (Waterman, 2001: 235), in other words, a critical cross-cultural solidarity informed by respect of cultural diversity, recognition of power differences, social responsibility, and reciprocity or mutual interchange and support. But, given the growing inequalities on a local and global scale, «what are the conditions, the knowledges, and the attitudes that make a non-colonized dialogue possible?» (Mohanty, 1998: 486).

In this essay, I reflect on the challenges for «internationalizing» the women's studies curriculum by discussing my experience teaching «Women in Developing Countries» at the University of San Francisco[3]. I argue that it is important to incorporate a global perspective into women's studies as well as all disciplines. However, as Wood observes, this is not sufficient to overcome «ethnocentrism, essentialism, and intolerance of diversity» (2002: 301). Most students enter my class with prevailing stereotypes: all women in developing countries are poor; all women in developed countries are not oppressed; and students in the U.S. can or

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2   For reflections on feminist pedagogies advancing the internationalization of women's studies from a critical and multicultural perspective, see the collection of articles in Lay, Monk, and Rosenfelt (2002).

3   I have taught this course for eight semesters since Fall 2001, when I joined the University of San Francisco as an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology. At the time, «Women in Developing Countries» was already listed in the University catalog, but had not been taught for several years, so I decided to revive the course, an initiative that was strongly supported by my colleagues and students. Since 2006, I have also worked as researcher at the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra.

should «help» women in developing countries[4]. A minority of students «doesn't care» about *them*. In both of these cases, students have a monolithic view of women's (and men's) experiences *here* and *there*, and do not connect the social problems of women (and men) in developed and developing countries.

In order to challenge these stereotypes and to create the conditions for a «non-colonized dialogue», I contend that students need to be exposed to social realities informed by different theoretical perspectives or «ways of thinking» about women/gender and development/globalization that both illustrate and challenge students' worldviews. Moreover, it is important to contrast the political implications of these theories and link them to students' ways of relating to women and men in or from developing countries (e.g., the «helping» *them* attitude). Finally, it is necessary to connect the social, economic and political contexts in which students and those they are studying live, so that students can see that the «local» and the «global» are constitutive of each other.

In what follows, I first explain why I design my course around theoretical perspectives and corresponding case studies, all of which I teach in a comparative and historical framework. Then I examine how the theories, case studies and activities included in the course serve to both illustrate and challenge students' «helping» or «not caring» attitudes. I conclude with some challenges regarding the building of critical knowledges and noncolonizing cross-cultural feminist solidarities.

Teaching theories and case studies comparatively and historically

From Fall 2001 until Spring 2006, I regularly taught the course «Women in Developing Countries» to undergraduate students at the University of San Francisco, an urban private Jesuit Catholic university with the stated mission of promoting social justice from a global perspective. This course is a lower-division elective in sociology, satisfying both the «core curriculum» and «cultural diversity» requirements. It attracts students from both sociology and a variety of majors.

Because of the title, however, the vast majority of the students are women[5]. Although the University has a diverse student body, most of the students enrolled in my course come from a white, middle-class background.

On the first day of class I explain that the course is not about «facts» or a survey of women's lives in developing countries and that we will not be looking exclusively at «developing countries», though I keep «developing countries» as the course's center of reference. I believe this focus helps to diversify the curriculum and brings visibility to diverse experiences within different communities in and from developing countries, especially their social movements, which do not attract the attention from mainstream media in the United States.

Contrary to some «readers» in the field (see, for example, Visvanathan et al., 1997), I do not organize my course around units specifically devoted to theories, spheres of reproduction (e.g., households and families) or production (the economy), institutions (the state, marriage), and social problems (e.g., female genital mutilation, AIDS, etc.). Furthermore, rather than confining all theories within a separate unit (see, for example, Visvanathan et al., 1997; Chowdhry and Menjívar, 2002), I spread the theoretical approaches throughout the syllabus; making use of case studies, movies, and novels, I present the material from a historical and comparative perspective. In sum, I reinforce with students that this course is about «ways of thinking» about *them* both *there* and *here*.

I start with a general discussion of social problems, social categories, social actors, social factors, and units and levels of analysis that can be identified in studies of women/gender and development/globalization. The sociobiography of Afro-Brazilian politician Benedita da Silva serves perfectly to illustrate all of these notions (see Benjamin and Mendonça, 1997). Then I move on to concepts of development, introducing students to the first theoretical approach, the Women in Development (WID) theory. Following a chronological path, the theoretical approaches covered throughout the course include Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD), Women, Culture and Development (WCD), and the growing literature on what is becoming a new theoretical approach or trend of studies that I call Gender and Globalization (GAG).[6] Each theoretical approach is accompanied by case studies, movies, novels, or outside activities, such as a field trip to Global Exchange, a non-profit organization located next to several sweatshops in the San Francisco Mission District.

Due to the current dominance of global capitalism, I devote half of the course to issues and debates relating to gender/race/class and globalization. Here I

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[4]   Despite its problems, I am using the term «developing countries» in a geographic, economic and political sense. «Developing countries» refers to the countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean with less power than the G-8 to control and benefit from the global capitalist political economy. I do not assume, however, that all groups and communities in developing countries are not members of the global elite. Likewise, I do not assume that all groups and communities in developed countries are members of the global elite. There are immigrant communities, African American communities, and poor white communities in the United States who are as marginalized as some socially and economically marginalized communities in developing countries. But we still find drastic inequalities between developed and developing countries, and the nation-state is still an important actor in controlling geographical borders; military forces; the mobility of both capital and labor; the international legal system; and the global financial and political economy.

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[5]   In the eight semesters I offered this course, an average of 32 students were enrolled (maximum enrolment is 35). Every semester there were only three to four men.

[6]   The Women, Environment and Development (WED) is another approach found in the field of studies of women/gender and development/globalization. However, for the lack of time, not always I have included this approach in the course. For an overview of the WED approach, see Mellor (2003).

focus on the neoliberal project of globalization, its structural adjustment policies, transnational migration and work, and how globalization is informed by gender, race, class, and sexuality ideologies dominant in developed as well as developing countries. Particular attention is given to the connections between different types of industries and working conditions in globalized economies (for example, factory work and various forms of service work).

Although I end up privileging the contemporary trend of studies on «gender and globalization», I still include the «old theories» and case studies that may not promote critical knowledges and a «non-colonized dialogue». In this sense, I diverge from Mohanty's recommendation that we organize syllabi around «social and economic processes and histories of various communities of women in particular substantive areas like sex work, militarization, environmental justice, the prison/industrial complex, and human rights» (2003: 522). I certainly cover some of these areas when addressing «gender and globalization». But I prefer to follow a theoretical trajectory in a comparative and historical perspective, because each theory has its own way of approaching and selecting the social problems that gain research attention at a specific historical conjuncture.

I believe that, by organizing the syllabus around theories, rather than substantive areas (or geographical locations, spheres of production-reproduction, and institutions), my course can better unmask and problematize most students' dichotomous and monolithic «ways of thinking» about *them versus us*. Throughout the semester, students overcome their reservations of theories by contrasting and applying theoretical approaches to case studies, novels, and group presentations on topics of their choosing. Because I cover a range of theories from the 1970s to the present, students are encouraged to relate their «ways of thinking» about «women in developing countries» to existing theoretical approaches. In the process of contrasting and applying these theories to case studies and to their own ways of thinking, some students «discover» critiques that have been made by theories that they will be exposed to later in the course. Throughout or by the end of the course, a critical examination of students' assumptions and worldviews may then emerge.

Each theory has its way of framing the relationship between the local and the global – thus nurturing the relationship between students and communities in or from developing countries. Each theory offers or implies different solutions. And each theory advocates or relies on a certain type of solidarity between and within «first world» and «third world» diverse communities. Therefore, in order to build a «non-colonized dialogue», we need to uncover how different theoretical approaches frame the relationship between the «local» and the «global», and how these approaches inform different types of solidarity.

The «helping» *them* approach of WID, WAD, and GAD

Since I began teaching «Women in Developing Countries» at the University of San Francisco students have consistently raised two questions: «What are the solutions to these social problems?» and «How can we help?» I have answered the first question by referring students to the readings, so they can find the solutions each theory offers. I have also facilitated more group discussions in class. In addition, I have organized a field trip to a local non-profit organization, Global Exchange, so students can see what some local groups are doing to find «solutions». The second question, however, has not been answered and has so intrigued me that I am now rethinking the political implications of the theories for building cross-cultural feminist solidarities.

The fact that students want to «help» gives me hope. They are not indifferent, they do «care», and this is an important starting point for social change. In fact, their concerns reflect the University of San Francisco's culture of an education committed to the advancement of social justice. As stated in its catalog, the University's vision includes «a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more just and humane world» (University of San Francisco 2003: 4). Like other courses, mine embraces this vision while also incorporating influences from critical feminist theories and practices I have found in the United States and in Brazil[7].

At the same time, I have problematized the «how can we help?» question and have reflected on the «helping» attitude as a theoretical approach to international solidarity. Writing this essay originally for the forthcoming anthology, *Are All the Women Still White? Globalizing Women's Studies* (edited Ime Kerlee and Janell Hobson) has yet given me another opportunity to further reflect on this issue. What are the categories of analysis (e.g., gender, race, class, sexuality) and the assumptions informing the «helping» attitude? From the «helping» standpoint, what is the relationship between developed and developing countries, the local and the global, the «helpers» (here) and the «helped» (over there)? Does the «helping» attitude entail critical knowledges and noncolonizing cross-cultural feminist solidarities?

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[7]   I was born and raised in Recife, a large city located in the Northeast of Brazil. While attending law school in the 1980s in Recife, I became involved with a human rights non-governmental organization focusing on class inequalities and social struggles over access to land. My association with feminism began in the early 1990s, when I moved to Berkeley to pursue graduate studies in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. There I was categorized as a «woman of color» (in Brazil I am «white»), started to read feminist theory, including the writings by «radical women of color», poststructuralist, postmodern and postcolonial feminist theorists, and joined for three years a group of Brazilian immigrant women. Research for my Ph.D. dissertation, which resulted in the book, *Women's Police Stations: Gender, Violence and Justice in São Paulo, Brazil* (Santos, 2005), gave me the opportunity to participate in Brazilian women's movements and develop an ongoing exchange with feminist activists and scholars in São Paulo.

As the literature on women/gender and development points out, WID, WAD and GAD draw on various theoretical traditions, offering different analyses and solutions to women's oppression and gender inequalities in developing countries (see, for example, Tinker, 1990; Benería and Sen, 1997; Moghadam, 1998; Chowdhry, 1995; Hirshman, 1995; Waylen, 1996). I build on this literature and utilize Waterman's (2001) distinction between the meanings of international solidarity to elaborate on how these theoretical approaches foster certain types of solidarity, some of which also correspond to the «helping» attitude.

The WID approach emerged in the early 1970s. It originated from a feminist response to development programs that did not include women and secluded them to the domestic role of motherhood (Tinker, 1990). WID advocates accept the premises of modernization and liberal feminism. They view modern societies as democratic and egalitarian. Traditional, agrarian societies are seen as male-dominated (Visvanathan, 1997). To promote capitalist development, traditional societies need not only to industrialize but also to adopt the Western political model of democracy. Similar to Western women in capitalist societies, women in developing countries must be integrated into the workforce and embrace modern values by becoming autonomous individuals. Western and liberated women can «help» their sisters in developing countries by teaching them the feminist values and ideals through the internationalization of feminism. This is well illustrated by «global feminism» and its slogan, «sisterhood is global».

Thus, WID relies on a «helping» attitude that calls for «identity solidarity» based on the values and ideals of modernization and liberal feminism. This type of solidarity *assumes* commonality of interest and identity – as opposed to *creating* identities and *negotiating* differences (Waterman, 2001: 235). As critics of «global feminism» have pointed out, assuming a common gender interest and identity reinforces ethnocentrism, essentialism, individualism and universalism (see, for example, Mohanty, 1991; Chowdhry, 1995). «Global feminism» homogenizes the experiences of women and men worldwide and at the same time, it creates and essentializes what Mohanty calls «the Third World difference» (1991: 53). It does not consider race, class, sexuality or other social structures that might intersect with gender in specific local contexts. It does not give room for respect of diversity. While all women in developing countries are depicted as poor, women in developed countries are depicted as coming from a white, middle-class background.

Because its level of analysis is exclusively national and local, «global feminism» does not make connections between developed and developing countries. The «global» is actually erased. Although there is recognition of power differences between the «helper» and the «helped», these power differences are not seen as shaped by interconnected local and global economic and political forces. The «helper» is in a superior position but disconnected from the (local) social relationships in which the «helped» is involved. The «helped» is perceived as a «victim» of national development and male domination. The «helper», being superior,

more powerful and disconnected from *them over there*, has the «choice» rather than the «social responsibility» of helping.

The WAD approach emerged in the mid-1970s as a Marxist critique of modernization theory and WID. Drawing on dependency theory and socialist feminism, proponents of WAD are critical of WID since it overlooks the exploitative logic of capitalism and the role of reproduction in production (Benería and Sen, 1981). They propose structural (not individual) changes informed by socialism and feminism. They also advocate a feminist approach that focuses on the interaction of the productive and reproductive roles performed by women. Like the dependency theory, the level of analysis of WAD is global, but the main focus is on the effects and dynamics of capitalism within the national contexts of developing countries. The relationship between developed and developing countries is one of dependency and exploitation: elites from developed and developing countries, especially multinational corporations, extract raw materials and exploit poor women's cheap labor in developing countries.

Adding social class to the analysis of patriarchy, WAD advocates privilege the experiences and «basic needs» of poor women (Sen and Grown, 1987). But they call for an international solution to end capitalism and patriarchy. «Global sisterhood» built on the ideals of socialist feminism is considered the best alternative vision to liberate poor women in developing countries (Sen and Grown, 1987, 24). Like all workers of the world, women must help each other and unite around their gender interest and identity.

Thus, despite its critique of modernization and liberal feminism, WAD also relies on a «helping» attitude that calls for «identity solidarity», though unlike WID this solidarity is based on socialist feminist values and ideals. WAD advocates recognize differences among women on the basis of social class, gender and race, but their privileging of poor women in developing countries ends up homogenizing and essentializing the experiences of both «third world» and «first world» women (Hirshman, 1995). Gender then becomes WAD's primary category of analysis, and «global sisterhood» is invoked on the basis of an *assumed* commonality rather than *constructed* identity in a process of *negotiation* of differences. In addition, although WAD advocates challenge the superiority of Western societies, their approach to global capitalism is so unidirectional that the powerless «local» becomes simply a consequence of the powerful «global». WAD ends up eclipsing the agency of poor women in developing countries, portrayed as «victims» of Western capitalism. As a result, those in the West might feel «guilty» and morally obliged to «help» oppressed women in developing countries. They may even reject the democratic values of the West altogether. Similar to WID, the type of solidarity coming out of WAD does not give much room for connections between the local and the global, as well as mutual recognition and respect of diversity, reciprocity and social responsibility.

Both WID and WAD are, however, important starting points for building critical knowledges and cross-cultural feminist solidarities. They move away

from indifference. Most of my students, as I mentioned earlier, enter my class already «caring» about others. Many of them have been influenced by the ideals of liberal feminism, though some are also familiar with other feminist and queer theories they have learned from experience within diverse San Francisco communities as well as from other courses on gender, sexualities and feminisms they have taken at the University of San Francisco.

At this point in the semester (usually by the third or fourth week), students make group presentations on any topic relating to women in any developing country. They are asked to reflect on the contributions and shortcomings of the WID and / or WAD approaches in light of the topics of their choosing. Most groups tend to embrace WID and select topics such as violence against women in Afghanistan, the veil in Iran, or female genital mutilation in Nigeria. The «Third World difference» is clearly put into practice here. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach that follows WAD challenges this view, but still does not offer a multicultural model of feminist solidarity.

The GAD approach, developed in the late 1980s, is eclectic in its theoretical roots. Building on and going beyond both WID and WAD, GAD incorporates a social constructionist approach to gender and development (Moghadam, 1998). The major contributions of GAD are the following. First, the analysis focuses on gender relationships, rather than «women». Gender roles and gender ideologies are not assumed, but rather become the objects of research. The social construction of gender and the meanings of femininity and masculinity are examined in a variety of particular local contexts[8]. Secondly, the global political and economic context shapes the local, but it does not *determine* the local, as WAD advocates would claim. Thirdly, GAD offers a holistic and interactive perspective on gender relationships and development, taking into account economic, political and cultural aspects of development as a gendered process. Finally, GAD emphasizes women's agency and empowerment through their own political mobilization, as opposed to WID's proposal of integrating women into the market as passive recipients of development projects (Young, 1997).

Contrary to WID and WAD advocates, GAD scholars do not propose a form of solidarity based on assumed gender identity or universal gender oppression. Yet, although they emphasize difference, rather than commonality, GAD scholars tend to overlook how race, class or other social structures interact with gender relationships in development processes. They also tend to overlook the connections between different communities in developed and developing countries.

The GAD approach is also appropriated by development agencies, such as the United Nations, in ways that essentialize gender differences, reproduce the «Third World difference», and may create a patronizing form of solidarity (see,

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[8]   See, for example, the collection of articles in Sen and Stivens (1998).

for example, United Nations, 1999). In this perspective, GAD relies on a form of «substitution solidarity». According to Waterman,

> *Substitution* implies standing up, or in, for a weaker or poor other. This is how international solidarity has been usually understood amongst Development Co-operators and «First-World Third-Worldists». By itself, however, a Substitution Solidarity can lead to substitutionism (acting and speaking for the other), and it can permit the reproduction of existing inequalities. This is a criticism of Development Co-operation, which may function to create a single community of guilt and moral superiority within «donor countries», whilst creating or reproducing further feelings of dependency and / or resentment in countries where social crises have evidently been worsening (2001: 235-236).

Thus, in some ways, the GAD approach does not break from the superior-inferior relationship also informing the «identity solidarity» upon which both WID and WAD rely. It does not necessarily connect the local and global, placing the «helper» outside of the social relationships in which the «helped» is involved. In this sense, the GAD approach, though important for social change, is not sufficient to foster critical knowledges and noncolonizing cross-cultural feminist solidarities.

Postmodern GAD, WCD, and GAG: Local-global connections across commonalities and differences

In the 1990s, scholars influenced by postmodern and postcolonial feminist theories attempted to «reconstruct» the GAD approach by «deconstructing» the «substitution solidarity» promoted by GAD practitioners and development «experts» (see, for example, the collection of articles in Marchand and Parpart, 1995). This postmodern GAD scholarship drew on Foucault's analysis of power-knowledge and built upon Mohanty's critique of feminist scholarship that produced the «Third World woman» as a singular monolithic subject. The postmodern version of GAD focuses both on differences and commonalities, and attempts to connect the struggles of «women of color» and immigrant «Third World women» in developed countries with the struggles and histories of «Third World women» (mostly working-class) in developing countries (see Marchand and Parpart, 1995). These connections are situated within the larger context of global capitalism. In this perspective, differences and commonalities exist within and across local-global contexts. Postmodern and postcolonial feminisms can bridge differences and create cross-cultural solidarities on the basis of «affinity» (not identity).

An «affinity solidarity», as Waterman points out, relies on «shared cross-border values, feelings, ideas, and identities» (2001: 236). In this case, there is recognition of differences but the solidarity is not based on a superior-inferior

relationship. The «helper» supports and is supported by the «helped». Yet they help each other on the basis of shared (not identical) histories, values and struggles. Their histories are both localized and globalized.

An «affinity solidarity» is important for moving away from ethnocentrism, universalism and clientelism. However, the global is still perceived as *shaping* the local rather than being *constituted* by the local. In addition, because it relies on particular shared struggles, histories of oppression, identities and ideologies, this form of solidarity is inevitably particularistic, as Waterman observes (2001: 237). In this perspective, those who do not «share» common oppressions and ideologies are denied participation in the building of such solidarity and may feel guilty, indifferent or angry. Just as in the case of «identity solidarity», social responsibility of those not sharing common oppressions seems unlikely to emerge from a solidarity exclusively based upon *affinity*.

Given the current context of neoliberal globalization, dominated by multinational corporations and militaristic states, it is necessary to go beyond *identity*, *substitution* and *affinity* models of solidarity. Each model has its value, but they are not sufficient to create anti-corporate and anti-militaristic global solidarities across different cultures, classes, genders, races, sexualities, religions, ages, political parties, and so on.

Woman, Culture and Development (WCD) is a new approach that also builds on GAD from a critical perspective. WCD advocates criticize GAD for not taking into account «culture» and «women´s agency». This approach is critical of the GAD for ignoring women´s everyday cultural and economic experiences in resistance to systems of domination. WCD proponents are also critical of GAD for ignoring other social structures besides «gender» that shape the experiences of women, such as sexual orientation, «race» and class. Although an important contribution to the field of women and development, this approach does not offer a critical analysis of the connections between the «local» and the «global» agents and processes of development (Bhavanani et al., 2003). In this sense, the WCD approach is still based on a national perspective of development and tends to promote a type of solidarity based on either «affinity» or «substitution».

Existing analyses of «globalization and gender (and race, class and/or sexualities)» have built on and gone beyond the *identity*, *substitution* and *affinity* models of solidarity by offering illuminating ways of connecting commonalities and negotiating differences within the current contexts of local-global capitalism. Saskia Sassen's work on globalization (1998), for example, offers a brilliant analysis of the connections between globalization and the demand, absorption and control of migrant women's cheap labor in both developed and developing countries. Offshore production and immigration are systematically related to each other due to structural transformations in the economies of both receiving and sending countries. In my course, I discuss and compare Sassen's framework with Sheba George's ethnographic study of immigrant nurses from Kerala and how these nurses reconstruct gender and social class within the context of their immi-

grant community in the United States (George, 2000). George's work illustrates well the connections between sending and receiving countries, as discussed by Sassen. But George adds another set of connections within the nurses' immigrant community that includes workplace, household and community (which in her study is the specific community centered on their church). George demonstrates how gender roles and social class are negotiated in each of these spaces differently.

I also use Cynthia Enloe's book, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (2000), first published in 1989, to further discuss the ideological and cultural dimensions of globalization from a feminist perspective. Enloe is one of the first scholars to demonstrate how international politics and globalization are informed by, and depend upon, gender, race and sexuality ideologies dominant in both developed and developing countries. She also shows how the local and the global, the personal and the international, are constitutive of each other. Despite some outdated data, Enloe's analysis is still illuminating and applies well to the current stage of neoliberal globalization. I have used this book for the past six years and the results have been remarkable. Enloe's discussion of topics such as «heavy» and «light» industries, sweatshops and the «Benetton model», domestic work and sex tourism, for example, problematizes the separation between the local and the global, as well as between students and global workers. Moving beyond the «helping» attitude, some students begin to see the connections between the contexts of their lives and those of «women» in or from «developing countries». Our field trip to Global Exchange, where we listen to activists' experiences and strategies to improve working conditions in sweatshops all over the world, including in the San Francisco Mission District, is, as students have told me, an «eye-opening experience».

There is another text that I find illuminating and an excellent model for cross-cultural feminist solidarities is *Global Sex Workers*, edited by Kempadoo and Doezema (1998). This collection examines globalization and sex work from a race, class and gender perspective. It also brings together the voices and experiences of scholars, activists and sex workers themselves. The contributors seem to combine *identity, affinity* and *reciprocity* models of solidarity. «Reciprocity», as defined by Waterman (2001: 237), «suggests mutual interchange, care, protection and support». This type of solidarity, in my view, gives more room for the inclusion of those who do not share the same identity or an affinity with the struggles of sex workers (or other workers in the global economy), but are inevitably connected to these workers, for better or worse, as consumers and citizens of the United States. In the process of engaging in such type of solidarity, the «helper» may not feel guilty or superior. Instead, he or she may begin to take social responsibility by reflecting on or practicing noncolonizing ways of participating in local-global cross-cultural coalitions.

Conclusion: Toward noncolonizing knowledges-solidarities

The major challenge facing courses like mine, as I and other feminist scholars have observed, is how to approach commonality and difference without promoting essentialism, ethnocentrism and universalism. As discussed throughout this essay, the way I organize my course and teach the material is one attempt to create critical knowledges, which may help to build noncolonizing cross-cultural feminist solidarities. Learning theories and case studies can, in my view, help to break stereotypes that reinforce essentialism and ethnocentrism. Interacting with communities outside of the classroom can also help to foster critical knowledges, though I do not believe that learning about «social realities» happens only outside of the classroom. Social realities are always perceived through the lens of theories. And theories are always informed by social realities.

I have reflected on the theories I cover in my course regarding their implications for building international solidarity. Throughout the process of writing this essay, I have become more conscious of the different forms of solidarity that can be associated with different «ways of thinking» about «women in developing countries». Waterman's distinction between the meanings of international solidarity has helped me to identify in WID, WAD, GAD and GAG specific forms of solidarity. The *identity* and *substitution* types of solidarity can be clearly related to the «helping» attitude. Both are valuable as well as limited for the building of a «non-colonized dialogue». Combining them with the *affinity* and *reciprocity* models of solidarity might help to break stereotypes. This in turn might promote critical knowledges and, hopefully, noncolonizing cross-cultural feminist solidarities.

By the end of my course, I have observed that students are impacted by movies on the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and the disappearance of women in Ciudad Juarez, readings on sweatshops, domestic work, the sex tourism industry, women's movements in South Africa and Brazil, and so on. Even more impacting is the field trip we make to the San Francisco Mission District, where students discover that Chinese immigrant women work for sweatshops they thought only existed offshore. Many students do not go beyond the «helping» *them* attitude, but at least they begin to connect aspects of their lives to *their* problems and solutions. This local and global connection is an important outcome of the course. How students will use this learning experience in their future endeavors remains an unanswered question.

«Solidarity» is a social relationship that does not start or end in the classroom. Solidarity is constructed through ongoing social interactions. It can take different forms and can be transformed over time. Building any sort of solidarity, and especially a noncolonizing solidarity, is a difficult task. It involves a long and often painful process of learning about oneself and others, which may result in reciprocal transformations and even larger social change. As Mohanty observes, «Undoing ingrained racial and sexual mythologies within feminist communities requires, in Jacqui Alexander's words, that we "become fluent in each other's histories". It also requires seeking "unlikely coalitions" (Angela Davis) and, I would add, clarifying the ethics and meaning of dialogue» (1998: 486). In a similar line, Spivak claims that our «first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn her mother-tongue. You will see immediately what the differences are. You will also feel the solidarity every day as you make the attempt to learn the language in which the other woman learnt to recognize reality at her mother's knee» (1992: 190).

Learning each other's languages and histories requires a work of translation. But not all kinds of inter-cultural translation are based on a noncolonizing dialogue. In this sense, it is worth citing the type of inter-cultural translation that relies on a «diatopical hermeneutics», as proposed by Sousa Santos (2002). This might offer some guidelines for achieving Mohanty´s call for a «noncolonizing feminist solidarity across borders». As Sousa Santos explains:

> A diatopical hermeneutics is based on the idea that the *topoi* of an individual culture, no matter how strong they may be, are as incomplete as the culture itself. (…) The objective of a diatopical hermeneutics is (…) not to achieve completeness – that being an unachievable goal – but, on the contrary, to raise the consciousness of the reciprocal incompleteness to its possible maximum by engaging in the dialogue, as it were, with one foot in one culture and the other in another, accounting for its *diatopical* character. A diatopical hermeneutics requires not only a different kind of knowledge, but also a different process of knowledge creation. It requires the production of a collective and participatory knowledge based on equal cognitive and emotional exchanges, a knowledge-as-emancipation rather than a knowledge-as-regulation (Sousa Santos, 2002: 48).

But even if we learn *their* languages and attempt to practice a noncolonizing work of translation resting on a diatopic hermeneutics, we should not assume that the construction of solidarity and inter-cultural translation are shared, universal goals (Santos, 1995; Sousa Santos, 2002).

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