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Defying Borders: Transforming Learning Through Collaborative Feminist Organizing and Interdisciplinary, Transnational Pedagogy

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Defying Borders: Transforming Learning Through Collaborative Feminist Organizing and Interdisciplinary, Transnational Pedagogy

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The authors provide a case study of how a group of faculty members was able to initiate transformation in student learning and institutional structures at a small university in the Midwestern U.S. through the introduction of collaborative feminist organizing and pedagogy. It details faculty-led initiatives that set the stage for innovative teaching and learning, and it describes the authors' experience in the face of resistance when introducing a global women's human rights course into the university's new core curriculum. Because of its diverse, interdisciplinary and transnational content, this course challenged deeply ingrained disciplinary and pedagogical borders of both traditional area studies and the field of history. The authors argue that progress toward diverse curricula can be made when colleagues work collaboratively and apply innovative pedagogical models to the classroom. Although specific to one university, these challenges to and strategies for transformation have broader application to all faculty seeking to diversify curricula and institutions.

Introduction

This article provides a case study of how a group of faculty members

was able to initiate transformation in student learning and institutional structures at a small, private institution in the Midwestern U.S. through the introduction of collaborative feminist organizing and innovative pedagogy. The opportunity for intervention appeared when our university instituted a new core curriculum that was to enhance interdisciplinarity, diversity, and global learning. While global learning enjoyed a clear privilege in the implementation of the new core, diversity initiatives were lacking. Like-minded colleagues organized to introduce a variety of new courses, including a pivotal core course on women's human rights. The development and teaching of this course, titled "Resistance & Rights: Global Women," brought feminist pedagogy to the center of the shared curricular experience of our student body and exemplifies many of the challenges we experienced in our attempts to diversify the curriculum.

In this article, we show how a collaborative effort resulted in curricular changes that greatly benefited the university, faculty and students, and which became visible through student evaluations, the dovetailing of course goals with university initiatives regarding diversity, and faculty collaborations in research goals. We argue that, apart from progressive content, collaborative work and innovative pedagogical models are of crucial importance in diversifying curricula. However, these strategies are more likely to run up against old ways of thinking, bureaucratic obstacles, and in some cases overt institutional resistance. It also required enormous effort that is often not rewarded. In the following sections, we will provide an overview of the efforts that went into bringing about changes in the campus climate at our institution before the implementation of the new core curriculum. We will also explain disciplinary difficulties we had to overcome, as well as reactions of the administration, faculty members, and students.

Paving the Way for Change

Beginning in the late 1990s, a few new faculty members with a strong interest in gender and feminist studies who arrived at our institution were surprised to learn that "feminism" was a dirty word on campus. Two examples will suffice. One of our colleagues proposed an honors course that included the word "feminism" in its name. The name was changed by the honors director without any consultation because he was afraid students would not enroll in the course. Another colleague published an article in a top international feminist journal but was told by a senior colleague that the article "didn't count" because it was not published in a "mainstream" journal.

While calls to diversify college curricula were voiced as early as the 1960s (Brint, Proctor, Murphy, Turk-Bicakci, & Hanneman, 2009), our university lagged behind. The university had coeducational, abolitionist beginnings and a gender studies minor, but the broader university curriculum had not been infused with courses that took account of privilege and the experiences of people of color, women, or other minorities. Clearly, there was a lot of gender equity work, along with other diversity projects, to be accomplished. Diversifying the curriculum became an important priority, especially because diversification is often touted as one of the best practices for creating a welcoming climate for marginalized and minority faculty and students (O'Rourke, 2002).

In an effort to move the institution forward (or back to its abolitionist roots), several faculty-led initiatives began to unfold. A faculty and staff women's caucus was established in 2002 with the goal of addressing gender equity on campus and creating a sense of community. Soon after, due to the work of this group, the university president brought a group of three external gender consultants to examine the university climate and the status of women, and to make recommendations for improvements. The consultants recommended a long-term investigation of gender and diversity issues on campus, and the university president established the Presidential Commission on Gender Equity in 2004, made up of faculty, staff, students and a Board of Trustees member.

After collecting internal and external data, conducting focus groups, interviewing administrators, and administering a campus-wide survey, the commission completed its work in 2007, making 92 recommendations to the president. Although these recommendations are still being implemented more than five years later, the commission documented what many had already known to be true: Both systemic inequities and more diffuse imbalances of power marred the working environment and needed to be addressed. One of the commission's recommendations focused specifically on the curriculum, calling on university officials to increase the number of gender- and diversity-related courses and provide support for such an endeavor. Indeed, incorporating issues of diversity into the academic mission and curriculum of an institution is frequently cited as one of the most important steps on the path to diversifying a campus (Anderson, 2007).

Also in 2004, the gender studies program, which offered only a minor at the time but has since grown to a major, was revitalized under new directorship that resulted in campus-wide programming, integration of more faculty, and more than quadruple the number of gender studies minors. The changes forged by the equity commission and the growth of

gender studies not only raised consciousness among those faculty and staff who already worked at the institution, but also played a significant role in attracting new faculty whose research and teaching were increasingly interdisciplinary, and whose pedagogical methods were feminist-oriented and defined within a framework of social justice.

The new administrator-driven university core curriculum was initiated the next year. The then-provost envisioned that this new core would focus on both issues related to international awareness and cultural diversity. Unfortunately, academic institutions tend to support global education efforts much more than diversity or interdisciplinary curricular approaches to social justice, gender, women's, ethnic, and sexuality studies courses and programs. It was no different at our university. Within Academic Affairs, there is a Center for Global Education, global initiative grants available from the provost's office, a Global Adventures in the Liberal Arts (GALA) program, an office and director dedicated to the Global and Historical Studies (GHS) component of the core curriculum, and an International Studies major (which was unfettered by accusations of bias from faculty, unlike the gender studies program). Faculty and departments were also encouraged to include international components as part of their program.

Compared to the robust health of global and international initiatives, those featuring diversity are anemic, often sprouting up as disconnected silos in a pattern that reveals how, when it comes to diversifying an institution, the old compartments and categories do not serve us well. Diversifying means thinking between and among isolated areas in ways that challenge rigid hierarchies and outdated administrative structures that favor canonical ways of knowing and learning. For both diversity and global learning, a true interdisciplinary environment is needed (Hovland, 2006).

Although contemporary curricula take a more interdisciplinary approach to global education, there has been a long history of failing to recognize power relations, difference, and imperialism in global education in the academy. Necessary changes are well articulated by Hovland (2005), who writes that "global learning at its best emphasizes the relational nature of students' identities—identities that are variously shaped by the currents of power and privilege, both within a multicultural U.S. democracy and within an interconnected and unequal world" (p. 1). For many institutions, and arguably at our university as well, an old model of global education is still strongly entrenched.

"Global and Historical Studies" (GHS), a two-course requirement for all students in their sophomore year, stresses the importance of studying the history of areas other than the U.S. It emerged as one of the most

prominent areas of the new core curriculum. The preference for an international component as compared to an interdisciplinary or diversity component in the new core became clear in the challenges we faced when proposing a “Global Women” course. In developing this course for GHS, we sought to challenge this deep-rooted model and to deal directly with issues of oppression and privilege, especially as they dovetail with a gender hierarchy that privileges the male over the female. We wanted to embrace feminist pedagogical practices of offering the course collaboratively, interdisciplinarily and transnationally.

The Collaborative

Capitalizing on the official rhetoric of the institution championing diversity, the call for new core courses, and available faculty expertise, a group of more than 25 junior and mid-career faculty, both women and men, established the “Collaborative for Critical Inquiry Into Gender, Race, Sexuality, & Class.” A grassroots initiative, the Collaborative collectively proposed courses as part of the new core curriculum, with strong emphases on diversity as well as power, privilege and oppression. Affiliated faculty saw this as an opportunity to continue the earlier progress made by feminist efforts as well as an opening to infuse the core curriculum with a worldview of social justice, critical race theory, feminism, and postcolonial studies.

The Collaborative includes faculty from the arts, humanities, education, social sciences, business, natural sciences, pharmacy, and physical education who seek to move beyond divisional designations to re-conceptualize the sites of our knowledge, sharing intellectual agendas that intersect thematically around issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality. The re-vamped core curriculum envisioned by the Collaborative sought, thus, to eliminate traditional divisions and disciplinary divides by encouraging the formation of learning communities and team teaching. Embracing these goals, the faculty of the Collaborative has brought academic diversity to the shared learning experience of our student body, and it has generated a learning community of scholars with shared interests from across the university. It has also helped us to make progress on our institutional goal of not merely internationalizing, but diversifying, the core course content.

Gender Studies-affiliated courses hearken from a wide variety of disciplines, but they are unified by the following criteria, which were developed and circulated by faculty teaching in the Collaborative:

1. Emphasize multiple and intersecting dimensions of identity and inequality, foregrounding—but not limited to—race, gender, sexuality, and class.

2. Consider the historical, cultural, political, and social experiences of marginalized communities.
3. Go beyond description to integrate and engage theoretical and critical scholarship.
4. Interrogate conditions that enable, perpetuate, and/or challenge social injustice and inequity.

The new core curriculum features five areas of inquiry: Text and Ideas, The Social World, The Natural World, Creative Perspectives in the Arts, and Analytical Reasoning. The Collaborative slices through all areas, infusing the rhetoric of the new core proposal with a truly innovative spirit. Examples of Collaborative courses include "Of Mothers and Dangerous Women: Gender and Crisis as National Text," "Gender and Generations in War and Peace," and "Assessing the American Dream Through the Lens of Black Women." Having created and taught more than 70 sections of 20 new, permanent course offerings, the Collaborative faculty group formed an integral part of the success of the pilot phase of the new core.

A key recommendation within the strategic plan of the institution proposes to increase the enrollment of minority students, and academic studies have shown that diversity in the academic curriculum attracts and retains women and minority students (Anderson, 2007). Reflecting on and answering these needs, the Collaborative has attracted with its courses a disproportionate number of both minority students and faculty members who represent diverse and protected groups and/or conduct scholarly research in diversity-related areas. It has become an intellectual home for many such colleagues, who are often asked by their home departments to contribute to the core.

Faculty members who work in the Collaborative are active scholars who have received university support in their travel to national conferences. For example, in April 2008, eight Collaborative faculty members presented a panel at the National Cultural Studies Conference in New York City. In 2007, 11 Collaborative faculty members attended the same conference in Portland, Oregon. Members of the Collaborative and Gender Studies presented at a Women's Leadership conference in Fall 2010. Connecting feminist pedagogy and diversity-driven service to research is crucial to the success of our collective efforts, especially in a climate where a tenure case is made or broken on the scholarship portion of the dossier.

The struggle of Collaborative faculty members to connect the traditional silos of research/teaching/service is part of a larger trend among academics. There is evidence for a return to viewing the academic as a whole person who is embedded in relationships that enrich, overlap, and

inform his or her professional academic space and work (Orr & Liechtenstein, 2004; Ryan, 2006). Family-friendly, work/life balance, flex time, service learning, renewed commitment to the public intellectual—all of these trends and movements signal a desire to move beyond the compartmentalized, corporate, professional model of the mid-century, clearly a male-centered paradigm.

Defying the Disciplinary Boundaries of GHS

In spite of the significant and measurable ways that these efforts contributed directly toward the institution's purported goals, the Collaborative met with persistent resistance to our collaborations, our professional identities, and our pedagogical methods. Our proposed "Global Women" course challenged many tenets of university practice: the dogged maintenance of disciplinary fiefdoms, a largely traditionally run curriculum, the entrenchment of area studies in global education, and the hegemony of the "Western Civilization" paradigm in history courses. The overt battle we encountered was in response to the content of the course and the political changes to the "neutral" curriculum it was assumed to make. Infused with a transnational feminist approach, our course implicitly challenged old school structural notions of what history, geography, and even education itself should look like. In this section, we will expand on the difficult challenge of defying the disciplinary and pedagogical borders of both traditional area studies and the field of history.

We first had to confront a comparative history model that relied to a very large extent on area studies for its basic understanding of formation of space, which replicates the colonialist precedent in carving up the world." Most of the core course offerings in GHS were envisioned as courses in area studies, at times culminating in counterintuitive comparative pairings. These courses included "China and the Islamic Middle East" and "Revolutionary Europe and Nigeria." Some of the university's newer or revised courses as part of the new core continue to reflect the neo-colonial area studies structure of the 1950s, "an era of imperialist nationalism" dominated by Cold War ideas of global control, binary and oppositional ideologies, modernization theory, and the ascendancy of superpowers whose leaders saw fit to foist their wars on "third-world" countries rather than on their own populations (Chow, 2006, p. 79). These courses concentrate on Africa ("Resistance and Reaction: Colonialism and Postcolonialism in Africa"), Asia ("South Asia" and "East-Asian Interactions"), Latin America ("Latin American Frontiers"), and Europe ("Modernizing and Contemporary Europe" and the aforementioned "Revolutionary Europe

and Nigeria"). Area studies views the world from the European lens of colonization, modernization, and imperialism, wherein Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East become distinct entities relegated to the periphery, separated from both each other and the larger world.

Education that is inclusive of understudied areas is of crucial importance, yet the current model's structure, coupled with students' proclivity for electing courses that deal with Europe, unfortunately promotes the "West and the Rest" frame of reference that does little to unseat the canonical Western Civilization curriculum. When studying and teaching gender, we can see how the area studies model hinders students from understanding the connections, differences, and, especially, the impact of colonialism on the histories of women around the globe (also see Shohat, 2001). Over 20 years ago, Mohanty (1988) made a fair assessment of many western feminists studying women in the "third world." She pointed to the practice by western academics that collapses all women in developing countries into the same category, one that does not allow for class, racial, ethnic, cultural, and historical difference. Not only does the concept of the "third world woman" reduce these women's complexities to a large group of undifferentiated people, but also classifies them in disempowering categories of perpetual victimhood, slaves to their cultures and their beliefs, and out of touch with all that could be supporting them, especially western feminism.

Scholars like Mohanty (1988) and Shohat (2001) have motivated gender historians to take women, men, and gender construction itself into places other than Western Europe and the United States, and conceived of those studies as historically and culturally constituted subjects who have made decisions based on complex motivations shaped by their time and place. As pedagogy, transnational feminism addresses and supersedes essentialist notions that link women's experiences around the globe on the basis of biology, and it questions the colonialist structure that underwrote the "women and development" approach that privileges and validates the experiences of middle-class women in the "West." This approach has prompted many to study the operations of gender in specific contexts of class, ethnicity, sexuality, and place as local conditions influenced, perhaps, by trends of transnational scope. In short, "internationalizing the women's studies curricula does not mean focusing on the foreign, the strange, or exotic women in distant places" (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006, p. xxi).

In keeping with these insights, we made the case for taking a transnational approach instead of one of area studies in designing the "Global Women" course. One of our first tasks was to work with colleagues outside the Collaborative to revise the learning objectives for GHS. The first

learning objective, for example, asked students to reflect “on cultures different from their own, especially non-western cultures.” Members of the Collaborative objected to the language of othering and the idea that cultures are fixed that is contained in this objective. In response, the first objective was revised to the following: “To employ a conceptual framework for global and historical studies which appreciates cultures as dynamic, heterogeneous, and constantly in conversation with each other.” The other three objectives we adopted were the following:

1. to draw on a variety of sources and disciplines—including the arts, the humanities, and the social and natural sciences;
2. to recognize both the benefits and the challenges of living in a culturally diverse and increasingly globalizing world; and
3. to continue development of expository skills.

To accomplish a transnational approach for “Global Women,” we organized the course around topics as they relate to the human rights framework instead of comparing countries. For example, we address violence against women, sexuality and health, motherhood and family life, education, politics, and the economy. In naming the course, we believed it was important to expose human rights abuses, yet we also wanted to show the ways that women have resisted these oppressions from within the dominant framework by constructing their own notions of human rights and mobilizing around their concerns.

Our second task was to challenge the traditional disciplinary notions of history, both as a field of study and as pedagogy. As a rule, the discipline of history has figured heavily within the required course offerings in university core curricula through the “Western Civilization” paradigm. These courses were as sweepingly broad in period as they were narrowly conceived in terms of historical actors, events, and ideologies. The expectations for required history-oriented courses has changed quite substantially in content, delivery, and substance within the last 10 to 15 years, however, reflecting new pedagogical theories stressing the need for inclusivity, difference, and interdisciplinarity in core curricula. Over half of American colleges and universities, among them Harvard University’s faculty of Arts and Sciences, have changed their requirements to include diversity and multidisciplinary core courses in an attempt to expose students to a variety of cultural, multiethnic, and underrepresented class and gender perspectives (see Glenn, 2009; Green, 2000; and Latzer, 2004).

Following this trend, GHS moved from Western Civilization-oriented classes to the rapidly burgeoning field of World History. Stressing cultural contact, exchange, and movement over that of single politico-spatial entities as if they were isolated, World History approaches history largely comparatively; it is not necessarily a history of globalization. Indeed, as the World History Association affirms, "As long as one focuses on the big picture of cultural interchange and /or comparative history, one is a practicing world historian" ("What is World History?" 2010). Transnational feminism, in contrast, allows for historical studies that promote a broader understanding of difference.

As a strategy for allowing a multiplicity of feminisms inside and outside the classroom, transnational feminism focuses on the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, and oppression within and beyond the borders of the nation-state. It demonstrates to students that patriarchy, in a variety of modalities, operates within a world system forged by the ties of global capital, colonialism, and economic exploitation at large. As Grewal and Kaplan (2006) explain, transnational feminism allows students to engage with women's studies in ways that not only promote increased awareness of women's struggles across national boundaries, but also stimulate critical inquiry in which historical processes such as colonialism and modernization operate in creating and maintaining inequality and difference.

When proposing the "Global Women" course, we faced criticism from proponents of the area studies model that it was "not historical enough." Transnational feminism is a contemporary paradigm, however, and, as such, necessitates non-traditional approaches to teaching history. Using what Foucault (1970) called *genealogy*, the course aims to refute the uniformity of history and the idea that it proceeds in a progressive, linear order, and instead looks for sites and moments of truth construction. Contrary to popular belief, genealogy is not a search for origins in a linear but reverse fashion, but rather for a plural and contradictory past that highlights how power constructs "truth" and "knowledge." Most important for our discussion here, genealogy requires students to engage critically with the idea and practice of history, intervening in the production of knowledge, especially as it applies to the construction of others. As such, genealogy makes our course historical in ways that are not presentist or anachronistic, but rather critical of the discipline itself.

A transnational feminist approach to both scholarship and pedagogy requires a new set of methodologies (Grewal & Kaplan, 2006). Indeed, by approaching our studies as well as our pedagogies transnationally, we are able to understand not only the linked phenomena across national boundaries, that is, as a series of related issues facing women within a

multiplicity of nation-states, but also—and more importantly—the movement of capital, goods, services, work and women themselves across and especially *beyond* national borders. The design of the “Global Women” syllabus allows us to draw on local or global cases that provide the best examples from a current events perspective. The conscious decision to utilize a human rights / women’s rights framework for the course forced us to think beyond the global “common experience” to embrace a transnational approach. This enabled us interdisciplinarily to address the gendered nature of globalization, immigration, care work, and—above all—the many adaptations, permutations, and the mobility, flexibility, and hybridity of feminisms. The transnational model spurs us to assess the pros and cons of the human rights framework for women’s advancement as well as to interrogate critically the inherent universalist standards of human rights discourse. It asks students to conceptualize what women’s rights look like from a variety of cultural lenses and positionalities in order to understand the rewards and challenges, adaptations, and negotiations—as well as the problems—in assessing colonial legacies of modernity.

Reactions: The Institution, Participating Faculty, and Students

Beyond disciplinary difficulties, we faced institutional opposition because the course offered new ways of faculty cooperation and logistical changes that were seen to undermine staid institutional hierarchies and disrupt the efficiency of a neoliberal system of organizing faculty and students as units and individuals rather than as teams or collaborators. Some of the disciplinary issues discussed above also reflected the stilted structure of the university itself, in which departments and faculty remained as isolated silos, preventing the organization, formation, and sharing of new modes of knowledge. In contrast, we designed “Global Women” to be taught in a collaborative way: All four sections of the course come together once a week for lecture, and each section meets separately with its instructor during the second period of the week. We needed to work around institutional schedules and bureaucracy to make this happen, however. For example, Registration and Records had trouble “fitting” the course into naturalized course grids and classroom designations. Unlike Research-1 universities, where this manner of scheduling is more common, our small liberal arts university prides itself on small class numbers and subsequent classroom space. The long chain of e-mails and phone calls that was required to bring this plan to fruition is an example of the subtle ways our institutional practices inhibit innovation and, therefore, work against diversification.

While team-teaching often presents instructors with a sense of dislocation, it can also be seen as a precondition for transformation (Colwill & Boyd, 2008). For the participating faculty members, collaborative teaching allows for the exploration of new materials and teaching strategies. We decided that each member of a group of four faculty would prepare three lectures and related discussion section activities per semester. Each instructor is free to teach on topics she is most familiar with, and each of us approaches the work from our own disciplinary or interdisciplinary background. This allows us to accommodate those faculty members whose own teaching and research interests do not necessarily focus on global women's issues.

The course design is flexible and allows for many variations, depending on which faculty members teach the course, their interests and expertise, and current events of note. The first time our group taught the "Global Women" course, we selected book chapters and journal articles for the various topics. In the second version of the course, we felt a textbook might add cohesion and we adopted Burn's *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective* (2005). In the first incarnation of the course, we were able to include perspectives from history, modern languages, media studies, and gender studies. In subsequent courses, scholars in sociology, communication studies, and anthropology joined us. Our group of faculty has found designing, teaching, and redesigning the course challenging, rewarding, and enriching. Not only did we share knowledge on various topics, we also shared concerns about the class, assignments, and other course strategies. As instructors, we benefited tremendously from our shared discussions and course preparation.

We recognize that teaching collaboratively is "messy" and that it might be easier to conform to current practices as a way to get immediate rewards. Student evaluations, department service, and tenure requirements can—individually and certainly accumulatively—work together to dissuade a faculty member from teaching such a "different" course. In many cases we have to risk discomfort and distress on both our students' and our supervisors' part. The emotional tenor surrounding the course, from proposal to delivery to evaluation, is simply more volatile. Unlike our male colleagues, as women teaching according to feminist pedagogy we are not guaranteed excellent evaluations (Schacht, 2000). Indeed, in retrospect, we desire to make more of the scaffolding of our feminist pedagogy visible to students, to invite them consciously to regard the structure of the course and the methods we have chosen as being intimately connected to the course material.

We also believe that students reap enormous benefits from the course.

One of the reasons “Global Women” has the potential to make a huge impact on campus and beyond is that all students are required to select two courses in the GHS track during their sophomore year. This means that our students typically are not gender studies majors. On the contrary, they come from various disciplines across the university, including education, pharmacy, music, and the business program. We strive to make the course accessible to students with no background in Gender Studies and to introduce them to some of the complexities of global gender politics. Our collaborative approach also allows students to see how we as faculty members approach questions from different angles and, sometimes, reach different conclusions.

Many of our students, however, express extreme discomfort with feminist pedagogy, as it asks them to question power and authority, validate personal experiences, and increase their social awareness and critical thinking (Hoffman & Stake, 1998; Maher & Tetreault, 1994). When talking about oppressions of women in “other” cultures, it is easy for students to turn a blind eye to inequalities and injustices occurring in our own backyards. As such, it is important to make sure that students also understand the struggles faced by women in the United States: not just unequal pay, but the specific obstacles faced by immigrants, women of color, and other disadvantaged women.

Students also can be resistant to learning about the negative implications of globalization. Transnational feminism promotes a critical assessment of the history, process, and impact of globalization beyond the capitalist spreadsheet. In our course, we ask students to confront the many truths about neoliberal globalization practices, even as neoliberalism works against the establishment of a feminist pedagogy on our campus. The encroaching corporatization of the university creates an environment that resists or is hostile to radical critique, and students in such a neoliberal environment are implicitly encouraged to resist the tenets and lessons of feminist pedagogy.

Student responses to the course have been mixed. For some, the proverbial “light goes on,” especially when asked about their personal experiences. For others, the class is “too political” or “does not present facts.” Not all respond positively to the combined lecture, as they are used to courses with no more than 25 students per class, but most enjoy the discussion section meetings. Initially, our class attracted almost only women, but recently we have noticed more men enrolling as well. It is likely that some students simply end up in our classes for pragmatic reasons, like an open seat in a class with a preferred time slot. But for others it is a positive sign, indicative that more young men are becoming aware

of the need for men and women to work together to bring about change.

It seems appropriate to end this discussion with some affirming voices from our students taken from their end-of-the-semester reflection papers:

Though aspects of each daily subject matter have stood out to me as being quite important, it is truly the most shocking and unbelievable things I have learned from this course that I know I will always remember. . . . I could see that many of these types of issues were impacting women across the globe in vary negative ways, and that impacted me to want to do something about it. And I also realized that even I (though living in a relatively modern and free society) could someday fall victim to these injustices. Thus, I really took to heart the methods by which I would be able to effect change for other women and myself in the future.

I am glad I chose to take this course. I have learned an incredible amount of information that has made me more aware of the lack of female rights round the world. . . . This recognition made me realize my misconceptions of feminism, and . . . I am proud to say that I strongly support gender equality!

Up till this class I never really analyzed women's rights and liberties on a global scale and considered the injustices that go on each and every day. Each day of class left me with a new outlook on life. The material had an immense impact on the way I see myself as a citizen of the world. The information was shocking at times, and even harder to watch at times. My newly acquired knowledge will have great benefits to me in my future.

From what I have learned this semester, I know what needs to be done to change things, and I believe that alone I cannot change anything. I can, however, sign petitions to support equality among men and women, and I can vote for every law that comes along in support of equality for women. I know that women are treated unfairly around the world, and I know that the process of changing the way things are will be a long one; it will require the help of many. Women deserve to be treated equal to men, and it will take a while for things to change, but the only way they will is if men and women begin to take the next step. . . .

As faculty members, we are quite gratified to read about these types of life-changing responses from students. Although we faced challenges, "Global Women" has proven to be an important course in raising awareness among students about inequality and injustice.

Conclusions

We have outlined how a dedicated group of faculty members at a small liberal arts university were able to overcome obstacles through collaborative feminist organizing and an innovative, interdisciplinary, and transnational pedagogy. We were fortunate to build on the seeds of change planted through early efforts of the Women's Caucus, a Presidential Commission on Gender Equity, and the Gender Studies program, which enabled like-minded colleagues to heed the call for participation in the new core curriculum. The newly established, core-focused "Collaborative for the Critical Inquiry Into Gender, Race, Sexuality, & Class" provided a shared space in which we could envision new modes of teaching and learning, especially in interdisciplinary ways. The Collaborative became an integral part of the new core, with exciting diversity-related courses.

These efforts, however, were met with resistance from various constituencies on campus, which presuppose a model of teaching and learning based on individual and departmental ownership over courses. We pondered the gendered implications of this phenomenon and realized that they were real-life manifestations of patriarchy, at a time when there are renewed calls for the academic to bring her whole person to work. We also encountered disciplinary difficulties in envisioning the new "Global Women" course as a collaborative effort with transnational content. Traditionally, international courses have followed a framework in which various geographic areas were compared with each other. Similarly, history courses used to be taught from a "Western Civilization" perspective. We wanted neither.

We have learned from feminist scholars the pitfalls of studying "third world women" through the lens of colonization, modernization, and imperialism, which does not allow for markers of difference, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality. We knew that a course in global women's issues could not be taught solely from a Western perspective, but must instead embrace a variety of cultural lenses and positionalities. We worked to overcome institutional barriers to offer the course in a way we saw fit, while overcoming perceptions of the "messiness" of collaborative work, which threatens the capitalist version of autonomy and assesses our work as "individual accomplishments." Both students and faculty, we believe, are benefiting from this approach.

From our discussion above, we conclude that institutional and intellectual transformation must take place through concerted and multi-pronged approaches. Change at our university came through the combined efforts of various groups over several years. An institution must also be open to

change, even if only on paper. We acknowledge the contribution of the university president in creating a Commission on Gender Equity, and we relish in the official rhetoric of the institution that encourages courses on global and diversity issues. But from our work, it is clear that change does not come easily.

It is currently unclear what the future of the Collaborative will be and whether the momentum of our group can be sustained. After our accomplishments, the university administration invited the Collaborative to become part of the formal institutional structure, a move we are not quite ready for. The offer has raised questions as to how we can make the most significant contributions: from the inside or from outside. It is also true that prolonged engagement with this struggle may deplete the energies of those who are most involved.

Education, as hooks (2010) states so poignantly and elegantly, is our main tool in decolonization: "Understanding that liberation is an ongoing process, we must pursue all opportunities to decolonize our minds and the minds of our students" (pp. 26-27). This is a sentiment, a vision, and a call that most educators would wholeheartedly agree with, yet one with implications that equally many of us fear. Moreover, how do we devise pedagogical strategies and curricula that truly accomplish this, especially from within structures ill equipped to house them? In a poignant gesture of "the personal is political," the four women academics, as well as other Collaborative faculty who joined us, maneuvered around and beyond institutional borders at a Midwestern U.S. university. In doing so, we move parallel to the many women around the globe who must defy a myriad of theoretical and material borders to escape invisibility and announce new ways of being and knowing.

Diversifying the faculty brings in new ways of connecting the work of the university to the real world of social problems, an endeavor that can help academia move beyond the stigma of the "ivory tower." To effect this radical change from ivory tower to experiential learning (in our case, through feminist pedagogy), from compartmentalization to immersion in the everyday, will demand a concomitant change in the way we envision and enact the role of the professor, the shape of disciplinary knowledge, the pedagogies we promote, and the profile of student learning that results.

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