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Review:

Valentine Moghadam. *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Valentine Moghadam has written a much-needed text outlining the work of transnational activists concerned with women's rights worldwide. Moghadam informs the reader that in an era characterized by heightened globalization and a restructuring of the state, there is a critical mass of educated, employed, mobile, and politically conscious women around the world, responding to the gendered process of globalization. She approaches the global economic structure as a set of economic policies and practices. Her point is to explain the worldwide social movement of women in terms of globalization processes such as the feminization of labor, growing social inequalities, and increased access to the new information and computer technologies by educated and politically active women.

The book focuses on Transnational Feminist Networks (TFNs). These TFN are defined as structures that unite women from three or more countries around a common agenda. She argues that the new global feminists have found common causes to align themselves and their groups with. Some of these causes include global space; women disproportionately living in poverty; cultural forms that are no longer territorially contained; social movements connected to social institutions; and distinct status versus shared status.

Moghadam maintains that the TFNs encompass the following attributes: they go beyond the idealism of the often critiqued 'feminist sisterhood,' they offer a political solidarity of feminists across the globe that transcends all boundaries, and they are made up of diverse social movements that rely on an 'idea' of networks, rather than a singular unified movement. The TFNs possess an open criticism of global capitalism and a shared ideology of global feminism. The movement is primarily comprised of activists and academics whose life work centers on women's rights, applied through a conscious cross-interdisciplinary approach.

She uses an analytical perspective to address structural, concrete, economic aspects of globalization that generate inequalities and problematize solidarity.

Employing a vast web of theoretical frameworks that link often disparate frames and literature together, she primarily draws from World Systems Theory, Marxism and Feminist Political Economy. The World Systems Theory she utilizes postulates that gender, class, and capital and state operate within a hierarchical world system divided into core, periphery, and semi-periphery. She highlights the consequences of globalization for women in the public and private spheres using a feminist political economy perspective—in particular the feminist political economy model that addresses the role of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) in the 1980s in the developing world and their relationship to growing inequality among the world's poorer women. Post-modernism (she asserts as synonymous with Post-colonialism), she claims, has a tendency to minimize the role of the state, which clearly as a Feminist Marxist is not the basis of her theoretical stance. She separates herself from many other contemporary globalization scholars here, by asserting that in an increasingly global playing field the state 'still does matter' as an autonomous actor.

TFNs contribute to several ideas about collective action and globalization: they are anti-neoliberal capitalist—but not necessarily anti-globalist; they want to democratize and engender global governance, not destroy it; and finally, they claim the state remains a key institutional actor because they favor the welfarist, developmentalist form of the state that is both democratic and women friendly. Valentine Moghadam labels this stance as *a critical realist approach to the state.* This approach to the state is in direct contrast to what Moghadam labels as postmodern or post-colonialism approaches, such as Leslie Sklair's. My reading of Leslie Sklair's work is that she is focusing on transnational practices within specific institutional contexts that cross state borders. Sklair claims that the global system operates at three levels: economic, political, and cultural/ideological. Her argument is that the transnational culture-ideology holds the system together (Sklair, 2002). This attention to culture and ideology has been confused as a postmodern non-materialist stance. Attention to the roles of culture and ideology in the gendered process of globalization need not be postmodern, but rather firmly situated into particular contexts with particular people, regions, issues, and conflicts.

A main strength of the text is the elaborate connections Moghadam makes between three often disparate literatures: work on globalization (much of it economic); the scholarship on the growth of NGOs,

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civil society and citizenship, global civil society, transnational advocacy networks, and global social movements; and the more feminist literature that has focused on women's movements and women's organizations. The highlighted interconnections of these schools of thought offer an analysis of globalization as a multidimensional and gendered process of socio-demographic, economic, political, and cultural changes.

Through ample socio-historical context, Moghadam emphasizes the nature and characteristics of women's organizations and the factors behind the emergence of transnational feminist networks in the mid-1980s. The notion of a 'women's world' develops a collective identity in the 1980s. In 1985, the Third United Nations World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya, raised global consciousness of women and inequity throughout the world. During this time period as well, women began disproportionately involved in irregular forms of employment, yet simultaneously remained tied to the work of the family and home. Moghadam skillfully points out that this shift to the paid work force did not accompany a redistribution of childcare and domestic work. Rather, women throughout the world were increasing participation in the public sphere while maintaining their duties and responsibilities in the private sphere. Additionally, there was a rampant increase of fundamentalism in the developing world. It is from this context, Moghadam illustrates, that TFNs came to the forefront, through the globalization process, by engaging with public policy at the national and international levels to create change. By the 1990s, TFNs aided in bridging the differences between the North and South Divide. TFNs create, activate, or join global networks to mobilize pressure outside states.

Moghadam provides accounts of six case study TFNs, describing the networks' activities, organizational structures, and strengths and weaknesses. She uses empirical findings through interviewing and an extensive literature review to show how these organizations affect public policy, research, and advocacy. Two shared battles among these TFNs include hegemony of corporate capital and Western norms with patriarchal agendas, and patriarchal nationalisms and fundamentalist movements. She points to lack of visibility and financial resources as the main limitations of the networks. The achievements of the networks are more expansive, according to Moghadam, including raising social and cultural awareness, organizing and participating in world conferences, promoting legislation protecting the rights of women world wide, and providing a voice in public policy to monitor the status of women of the world.

The organizations reject notions of cultural relativism in favor of a universalist approach: "Like other TFNs, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, evinces a discourse and orientation that are universalistic and modernist rather than postmodernist" (Moghadam, 2005, p.154). The rejection of cultural relativism is in favor of a unified notion of 'human rights.' This raises the question of a possibility of a 'global ethic' (Kung, 1998), in which a conception and practice of women's rights are universal, regardless of cultural tradition and/or ideology. This is a dilemma that globalization scholars are presently addressing. Moghadam's stance of rejecting cultural relativism is a bold one, in favor of creating a homogenous set of standards, regardless of cultural difference, that 'protects' the rights of women worldwide.

She argues that globalization has two faces: one of inequalities and one of democratization. The global economic environment gave rise to a new consciousness, influenced the formation of new women's organizations, and inspired a new form of women's organizing and mobilizing. The rise of Information of Computer Technologies aids the strength of the TFNs. In addition, the twin processes of global economic restructuring and religious fundamentalism galvanized women around the world and resulted in the formation of TFNs. In response, Moghadam has illustrated how women's organizations are integral elements of globalization in its economic, cultural, and political dimensions.

Moghadam posits that the labor movement could benefit from the lessons of TFN if the labor movement became more global in its approach to collective action. However, labor is a different beast entirely, and historically a universalist approach to labor has only led to more factions among industries, skill level, gender, race, ethnicity, and unionization status. The unique position of the TFNs is that they cannot be used as a blue print for global social movement activism. This text is a much needed addition to the literature on globalization, and feminist activism more generally.

References

Kung, Hans. (1998). *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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