The growing globalization of the world capitalist economy, which will continue its expansionist trend into the new millennium, represents a decisive turning point in any reappraisal of the evolution of women's movements and conditions in the developed and developing countries of the Americas. This essay tries to capture some of the major theoretical developments and realities shaping the experiences of U.S. Latinas and Latin American women in the era of globalization.

Any analysis of this nature must begin with the recognition of the fundamental differences in the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that have shaped U.S. Latinas' and Latin American women's experiences. Moreover, it also requires consideration of the interplay between the structural conditions that Latinas face in U.S. society and the transnational interconnections that different Latino/a groups maintain with their respective Latin American and Caribbean countries of origin. Contemporary transnational interconnections and bidirectional contacts between the United States and the countries of the Americas are increasingly creating overlap among U.S. Latino-focused ethnic studies, women's/feminist studies, and Latin American and Caribbean area studies. While area studies programs in the United States primarily emerged from cold war foreign policy concerns, programs that focus either on the collective U.S. Latino/a experience or on individual nationalities, such as Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Dominican studies, are rooted in a long history of socioeconomic and civil rights struggles. Indeed, the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s influenced the advent of both ethnic and women's studies academic programs. The original impetus of Latino/a and women's studies was to critique prevailing paradigms and produce new knowledge about traditionally marginalized groups. Although the field of women's studies challenged patriarchal structures and the androcentric constructs, behaviors, and exclusionary canonical practices of the Western tradition, it was initially dominated by the experiences of white middle-class women.
At the same time, ethnic studies was focusing on issues of racial and ethnic oppression and cultural nationalism, without paying enough attention to the sexism, heterosexism, and racism found within these groups. Out of the subordination of Latinas and their initial exclusion from both a male-dominated ethnic studies movement and a white-dominated women’s movement, Chicanas, puertorriquenas, and women from other disenfranchised U.S. ethnoracial minorities began to forge and articulate a feminist consciousness and a collective sense of struggle based on their experiences as members of diverse individual nationalities, as well as on their collective panethnic and cross-border identities as Latinas and women of color. These perspectives were fostered in the pioneering anthologies *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave* (Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982) and *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981), which made it clear that the process of constructing new, more inclusive emancipatory knowledge required full consideration of other sources of marginality and oppression. They also underscored the power differentials between women and men, and within and among groups, and denounced the culture of intolerance and the exclusionary or marginalizing practices of mainstream U.S. society and Western intellectual traditions. Furthermore, these writings established the need for women of color to engage in the processes of defining themselves, asserting their agency, and building their own intellectual traditions.

The process of problematizing and rectifying the initial shortcomings of the U.S. ethnic and women’s movements was both conflictive and divisive, but it was also a necessary process that forced the emerging fields of women’s and ethnic studies to pay more attention to the social, racial, and cultural factors that produce differences within and among groups at national and international levels in order to find common ground; to influence research and teaching endeavors; and to explore the potential for building intergroup solidarities and meaningful coalitions. It was quite evident that this potential could not be achieved unless it acknowledged the differences among women and the conditions that create those differences. Thus, it was U.S. Latinas and other women of color who introduced gender into ethnic studies and racial issues into women’s studies. The term *women of color*, though problematic because of the same homogenizing tendencies found in the term *white women*, became widespread as a way of fostering the idea of common struggles, but, more accurately, it signaled a direct oppositional stance against the deficient and exclusionary tenets of white middle-class Western feminisms. Latinas and other women of color recognized early on that their particular civil rights struggles transcended U.S. borders and resonated in the human rights, socioeconomic, and po-
itical survival struggles of the rest of the hemisphere and other parts of the third world. This view, in turn, fostered a national and international dialogue on the intersections of gender, race, and ethnicity, on the power differentials between developed and developing countries, and on the transnational interconnections between U.S. Latinas and women from Latin American and Caribbean nations around issues such as human rights, peace, health, (im)migration, the environment, and economic restructuring.

Lesbian and gay issues also came out of the intellectual closet, and perhaps one of the most noticeable new areas of scholarship on Latinos/as in recent years has been the deconstruction of female and male sexuality and a concomitant denunciation of heterosexism. Since the publication of This Bridge Called My Back (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981) and Juanita Ramos's anthology, Compañeras: Latina Lesbians (1987), several new studies and edited volumes on gay and lesbian issues have been published. Considering that lesbianism and homosexuality are among the most taboo subjects in the Latin American/U.S. Latino/a experience, these works contribute to breaking that silence. Most are aimed at shattering prevalent myths and stereotypes, but they also analyze the contingent nature of sexual identities, how these identities are negotiated, and how constructions of masculinity and femininity vary with sociocultural context and historical moment.

The past decade has seen increased scholarship on the pluralistic nature of feminism, the differences among women, and the many forms feminism assumes within specific communities, social sectors, nations, races, and regions (Bose and Acosta-Belen 1995). As we consider the effects of globalization, academics are still struggling to define broad-based multicultural and gender-inclusive approaches to the differences and commonalities among feminists and women's movements in various parts of the globe. Do we have an adequate conception of the variety of Western feminisms as well as of non-Western feminist discourses and women's movements? What, for instance, are some of the major differences in the development of North American and Western European women's movements, or between those in Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa, the United States and Japan, Cuba and Puerto Rico? Which issues and conditions transcend national borders and which are specific to a country or local community? Why do some women's movements not regard the state as the major instrument for improving their status, while others do? What are the factors that make women's movements more grassroots oriented in some countries than in others? What makes women's/gender studies flourish in academic settings in the United States but primarily in independent centers or institutes in most third-world countries? If feminism is
considered a historically continuous and fluid movement, what are the factors that produce periods of stagnation or expansion in particular countries? If there is an international women's movement, what holds it together? And, if some of the present social and economic conditions are global and general, how can we bring about articulated forms of global action around specific issues? Which are the issues that make transnational coalitions possible? The answers to these questions are far from obvious. Nonetheless, the questions themselves underscore the pitfalls that feminism must avoid to keep from becoming another homogenizing Western master discourse that can be exported, like any commodity or development program, to "modernize" the developing world. We need to listen to the voices and experiences of women in less privileged settings. The goal of cross-border solidarities and coalitions around specific issues such as health, the environment, human rights, violence against women, prostitution, major socioeconomic inequalities, or survival in the informal economy can be advanced only if major differences among the women of the Americas are recognized and if we engage in dialogue based on mutual respect for our differences and seek a convergence of goals.

Different theoretical frameworks are needed as well. Early discussions of women and development in Latin America and the Caribbean generally took a dichotomous approach: women were viewed as either helped or exploited by development, either drawn into paid employment or excluded from it. In the latter case, theorists relegated women to the role of homemaker and ignored their contributions to the informal economy. The shortcomings of these approaches led feminists to reconceptualize work itself as an activity to be measured on a continuum from formal paid work to informal paid work to household work (Ward and Pyle 1995). This approach clearly established that development, usually thought of as an activity in the productive sphere, is not separate from the domestic sphere and that the macro and micro levels of economic analysis can and must be considered simultaneously and interactively.

International macro-level relationships need to be analyzed as well, since growth and changes in Latin American and Caribbean women's employment have been integrally tied to trends in North America and especially to the role of Latinas and other women of color in the U.S. political economy (Fernández-Kelly and Sassen 1995). For example, money sent by U.S. Latinos/as to families in their homelands constitutes a significant portion of some Latin American economies. Moreover, during the 1980s, U.S. corporate strategies began to shift, generating major employment changes, population displacements, and labor migration flows throughout the hemisphere. Increasingly, corporate emphasis has been on internation-
alizing the service sector, rather than manufacturing, as well as creating global markets in finance. The former "global assembly line" is transforming into what has been described as "regional clustering" brought on by corporate attempts to lower production costs through the use of computer technology rather than by moving production work from country to country (Nanda 1994). The parallel structure in the gendered division of labor within the United States and the developing countries of the hemisphere is shaping and changing women's roles. As a result, U.S. Latinas often work in the garment industry, in computer assembly, or as domestic workers—work similar to that done by women in their countries of origin—and families in both places need multiple earners.

Much of Latin American and Caribbean women's organized resistance to their subordination has been based on survival needs, often at the individual or family level as well as in the neighborhood or workplace, rather than at the level of large-scale social movements, political parties, feminist groups, or labor unions. For instance, families use multiples income strategies, with members engaging in a variety of survival efforts, such as earning wages in the formal sector, growing subsistence produce, trading in the informal sector, or performing unpaid household labor. Yet, in reaction to development models that focus on growth and increased profits for transnational corporations, often to the detriment of the environment and the well-being of native populations, women have played an active role in calling for new models of sustainable development. Since globalization implies the creation of new regional centers of capital accumulation and the formation of new alliances among social sectors at local, national, or transnational levels using new technologies (Jonas and McCaughan 1994), it also calls for similar alliances among women to combat the persistent inequalities and abuses introduced by transnational capital. Members of such women's organizations are not necessarily feminists, but their consciousness is frequently raised through praxis and through networking with other women of color at international meetings.

In sum, Latinas from the North and South have played an important role in internationalizing women's studies and in denouncing both the persistent basic inequalities and prejudices endured by third-world populations as well as their disadvantaged or subordinate position in relation to Latino men. Latina feminists in the United States increasingly are engaging in comparative work, trying to envision or imagine new models that advance knowledge of their individual ethnic group experiences and, at the same time, undertaking the difficult task of building bridges of understanding and solidarity among ethnoracial groups at national and international levels. Many Latino studies programs have already made alliances with
women's studies programs, which themselves have begun to focus on global gender issues, thanks, in part, to initiatives such as the Ford Foundation's Women's Studies, Area and International Studies (WSAIS) grant program. Links among women's, ethnic, and area studies, in spite of their disparate academic and political origins, are fostered by the transnational dynamics created by the common impact of globalization on developing countries and on women of color living in capitalist metropolitan centers. However, the convergence of minds and goals among women of different races, nationalities, and classes is more an unfinished project than an accomplished fact. The second edition of This Bridge Called My Back has a sobering new foreword by Cherrie Moraga that touches on the state of an imagined unity among feminists of color and still poses a major challenge: “Third World feminism does not provide the kind of easy political framework that women of color are running to in droves. We are not so much a ‘natural’ affinity group, as women who have come together out of political necessity. The idea of Third World feminism has proved to be much easier between the covers of a book than between real live women” (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983, iii).

The concerns of third-world feminists vary considerably and are not always obvious to those of us in core countries. For peasant, poor, and working-class women, the primary concern is survival: escaping war and violence or having ready access to shelter, food, and potable water for their families. Professional women strive for increased political participation and socioeconomic equality. For other women, the topics are sexuality, reproductive rights, and health issues, running the gamut from sex tourism and prostitution, female circumcision, and selective abortion to protection from AIDS and the availability of safe birth control. Still, in large parts of the world, with high rates of illiteracy, the basis of economic rights is sought in much-needed education. While these concerns may seem far away in a sense, women in many core countries share similar issues. Moreover, many third-world problems are often generated by the economic control exerted by first-world transnational corporations and international economic agencies in these countries. In this new millennium, increasing transnational migration and continuing transnational links make these issues part of a common cause.

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