

CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES: GIRL-LED TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUES TO COMBAT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Turbulent times in relation to the lives of girls and young women call for solidarity and global action. One of the legacies of globalization is the increased recognition of a borderless world which erases an ‘over there’ and ‘over here’, and which diminishes some of the distinctions between the idea of Global North and Global South particularly. Nowhere is this more apparent than in concerns about the well-being of girls and young women in relation to sexual violence. In the Canadian context, we have become increasingly aware of the shameful situation of the many missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women, and statistics that note that Indigenous women are 2.5 times more likely to be victims of violence, and 6 times more likely to be killed, than non-Indigenous women. World-wide these numbers are particularly shocking in relation to girls and young women with over 120 million girls (one in ten) report some form of sexual violence. This concern for the well-being of girls and young women was also evident at a roundtable on gender and circumpolarity convened by the University of Mid-Sweden in October 2015. In bringing together feminist scholars from Norway, Sweden, Russia, Finland, and Canada it was clear that while ‘North’ occupies very different meanings in these various countries (particularly in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples), there are many critical convergences when it comes to the lives of girls and young women, with high rates of sexual violence and challenges to their well-being clearly at the top of the list. In this paper we want to begin to offer an analysis of issues of sexual violence that frames the complexities and possibilities for research teams working with girls and young women across the Global North and the Global South. What would a ‘circles within circles’ approach look like and how might the alliances formed at a gathering such as this one in Moscow in April 2017 contribute to a circles within circles approach?