

Integrating Tenacious Hope and Feminism: Global Necessity

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Abstract: Two scholars coming from different parts of the world, namely, Russia and the United States, enter into a conversation about feminist ethical dilemmas in communication scholarship and ways to address them in light of current crises unfolding around the world. In examining problems or tensions associated with gender justice, we integrate the concept of tenacious hope, developed by Arnett (2014, 2015, 2020, 2022), with processes associated with feminist theorizing to illuminate how dilemmas unfold in different locations impacted by persistent and emergent threats to human rights and gender autonomy. Tenacious hope seems to be an integral yet unrecognized quality of feminisms, which, as movements, center action and refuse to accept *simpliciter* that the change will suddenly materialize or just happen. Tenacious hope offers an ethical stance that, when integrated within feminisms, allows for countering the disintegration and disregard for the Other ubiquitous in today's discourse. The concept of tenacious hope becomes a lens through which feminist ethical dilemmas and feminist activist practices can be analyzed to understand intersections, overlaps, and differences that inform communication scholarship today.

Keywords: tenacious hope, feminist ethics, feminisms, communication

Two scholars coming from different parts of the world, namely, Russia and the United States, enter into a conversation to challenge each other about ways to engage with difficult perspectives—not by glossing over differences and disagreements but by showing how in a dialogue each perspective matters and is valued. Drawing from Martin Buber (1967), Ronald C. Arnett (2015) contends that dialogue had been and remains “the hope for this hour” (1). Today, this hope seems illusive. As we are writing these lines, the coronavirus pandemic that led countries to shut down borders and left millions dead worldwide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2023) has been usurped in news about continuing racial unrest, health and economic disparities, climate change, and the Russia-Ukraine war. The need for dialogue seems ever more critical today.

We used this opportunity to hone in on one question that brings together Arnett's (2022) tenacious hope and our own feminisms, namely, how can an integrated tenacious hope and feminist theorizing help communication scholars and activists imagine and work toward alternative futures in light of current crises? In this endeavor, we explicate tenacious hope and feminisms beyond simply saying that these are ongoing efforts to bring optimistic visions of better lives to fruition and to engage in praxis for equal participation and gender justice, respectively. To compare and contrast these concepts, we focus on communication and feminist ethical dilemmas.

We explore each separately and in combination through our conversations and our autoethnographic reflections. We link two concepts developed by Arnett—tenacious hope and dialogue—into a conversation on ethical dilemmas that feminism(t)s face in the current moment, complicated by persistent and emergent threats to human rights, bodily integrity, and safety of women around the world. In bringing together these two concepts, which have not been aligned together previously, we work on how feminists can convince themselves and others that current struggles are not hopeless but require the unity of opposites offered by Arnett. We first discuss tenacious hope and feminisms, then shift to four questions that draw upon tenacious hope-feminist intersections and contradictions. This question-based approach crystallized during our multiple conversations over the last year, when we discussed the feminisms with which we each are familiar and the bearing that tenacious hope has in our lives.

Tenacious Hope and Feminisms

Tenacious hope seems to be an integral yet unrecognized quality of feminisms, which, as social movements, center action and refuse to accept *simpliciter* that the change will suddenly materialize or just happen. Indeed, the continual generation of global and locale-specific feminist waves are hopeful insofar as they orient toward agendas needed in particular times and places, knowing full well that single initiatives or interventions can never achieve all the needs for gender justice. At the same time, dialogue, “a continuing hope for this hour” (Arnett 2015, 1), offers a productive mechanism for countering the disintegration and disregard for the Other ubiquitous in today's discourse. The concept of tenacious hope becomes a lens through which feminist ethical dilemmas and feminist activist practices can be analyzed to understand intersections, overlaps, and differences that inform our work today. We do not aim to generalize or issue universal prescriptions; rather, only focusing on a snapshot of time that is now, we hope to incite further reflections of fellow scholars on what it means to engage with feminist ethical dilemmas when tenacious hope and dialogue become our guiding lights in our own situated moments of hopefulness and despair.

Evgeniya: Russia has been waging a war on Ukraine for a year and a half at the time when I am writing these lines. The war has caused not only fatalities of Ukrainian civilians, and Ukrainian and Russian soldiers, but also an immense divide in Russian society and Russia's cultural cancellation. As a

direct result of the war, women in Russia are recruited by the vicious tandem of the state and Orthodox church to serve the nation by birthing new citizens and taking care of the wounded and crippled by the war. The law banning so-called “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” (Sauer 2022), the change of Constitution to include a sentence to specify that marriage is a “union of a man and a woman” (President of Russia 2020), and repeated exhortations from the state’s representatives to curb or ban abortions and to prohibit gender-affirming surgeries signal terrifying strengthening of militant patriarchy and direct threats to women and LGBTQAI+ folks. At the same time, it is feminists in Russia who remain agents of cultural and political opposition to Putin’s regime and its war. It is indeed a moment when hope is crucial yet insufficient at the same time.

Patrice: There are a number of US national exigencies that are worrisome to say the least—the upcoming national elections that will undoubtedly prove contentious, the reversals in or hindering of voting and women’s bodily integrity rights, climate change, crumbling of rigorous higher educational initiatives and the banning of books in local communities, and indigenous people’s loss of place and resources essential to their livelihoods and well-being, among others. To say that we hope this phase in US politics will pass, much as the McCarthy Era of blacklisting “communists” in the 1950s eventually dissipated, says nothing about what can or should be done. It is difficult in the moment and without collective strategizing to know how to mobilize agency most effectively and who might be inadvertently marginalized.

As we think about these moments in our lives, we move into the next section that discusses the bases of tenacious hope and feminisms.

Bases of Tenacious Hope and Feminisms

In this section, we develop the concepts and embodied responsibilities aligned with tenacious hope and feminisms by providing overviews and distinctions among different voices as situated in their local cultures and with global significance.

Patrice: It may seem odd to begin by discussing the Scottish Enlightenment, a period of time from 1688 to 1800, as named by William Robert Scott (Arnett 2022, 4). Arnett (2022) offers tenacious hope as a concept he developed when reviewing the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers’ works and as an antidote to unbridled optimism and as a modernist belief that progress will continue unhindered. In the midst of contemporary geopolitical struggles, conspiracy theories and acts of hatred, and the emergence from COVID-19 pandemic chaos, hope offers assurances that things will get better.

Arnett (2022) states that his “project unmask[s] optimism as paradigmatically bound to the singular direction, a predetermined course for the good” (1). Arnett cautions against such abstract thinking and feelings untethered to the realities that hard work is needed—the obligation to do this labor—to actualize the hopeful

futures that people envision. He says that tenacious hope requires reflection as well as “responsible individual action as one discerns how to navigate an understanding of the good nurtured by a unity of contraries, a theme long present in Scottish intellectual life” (1). Tenacious hope can be visualized as the unity of contraries or tensions of self–other, individual–community, family–work, assurance–doubt, imagination–experience, and present–future (the “not yet”) that emerge full force in situated action grounded in time, place, and embodiment. Tenacious hope offsets commercial growth, focus on individualism, and “obsession with a future good” (6). The tensions with which tenacious hope grapples manifest in different ways. These include abdication–responsibility, mindless pursuits–reflection, progress–restraint, universal–local, passivity–vitality, fantasy–realism. In struggles between optimism and tenacious hope, there are no final answers, just warnings that when one equates victory with a sense of reified clarity, tenacious hope falls into the abyss of unidirectional optimism and progress (Arnett 2022, 12).

The ethical appeal, then, of tenacious hope is that it “demands responsibility from and for many—including those not directly seated at the table of decision-making” (Arnett 2022, 18). Tenacious hope aspires to change and transformation. This transformation unifies “individual achievement and concern for social life” (23). Different Scottish writers eschewed cause–effect thinking and promoted the need to cultivate unending questioning along with tackling difficult issues with integrity and compassion.

Arnett’s communication ethic of tenacious hope is one that envisions a future while remaining grounded in practical reality and holds much in common with core feminist values (Buzzanell 1994; Linabary et al. 2021). Like tenacious hope, feminist inquiry and advocacy rail against linear thinking and its simplistic solutions. Both embrace emotion, community, context, and collaboration. These characteristics are found in the different waves of feminisms and current explorations of how to counter commercialism, reliance on capitalism as a solution for human needs, and emphasis on the self (e.g., neoliberalism, post-feminisms, political factions) in the Global North and Eurocentric cultures (see Maingi Ngwu 2022). In contrast, for the Global South, the emphasis is less on theories, specific goals, and fights for gender equality than on injustices that are grounded in lived conditions (Bachmann and Proust 2020). Moreover, “feminist scholarship from the Global South also pays particular attention to five interrelated issues where the experiences of Global South citizens are especially illuminating: economic justice, migration, human rights, decolonization, and peace and disarmament” (Bachmann and Proust 2020, 71). Asiatic feminism emphasizes female flourishing and gender egalitarianism (Yin 2009). African feminisms focus on fluidity, survival, orality, shapeshifting, holism, situationality, and collectives, not simply women’s and children’s interests pitted against those of men and members of LGBTQ+ communities (Biwa 2021; Cruz 2015, 2017; Maingi Ngwu 2022). Ideas about gender and performance from global perspectives center on identity, context, communication, and feminist studies (Kroløkke and Sørensen 2006) in ways that attend less to waves and particular cultural and local interests and more on how knowledge is constructed and where gender power imbalances shift.

In knowledge and power construction, our characterizations of early feminist movements are too simplistic to portray the complex feminist activity and (mis)alliances within each setting and among different groups that self-identify as women, men, and LGBTQ+. With third and subsequent waves, greater attention to intersectionalities and culture, contradiction in human communication, difficulties in enacting inclusion and difference, and attention to local and global movements afforded by technologies came to the forefront (see Buzzanell 2020). These newer appeals sustain tensions and provoke different feminist dilemmas. With these tensions has come reckoning with consequences and appreciation for local circumstances, much as Arnett (2022) argues that “communication ethics as tenacious hope dwells in a home of ethical striving and unquenchable self-doubt, a unity of contraries” (195).

Evgeniya: Arnett’s formulation of tenacious hope centers it as “a form of social resistance” (2014, 274) that promotes “communication ethic of responsive transformation” (2022, 58), highlighting its stubbornness in the face of social injustices and flexibility to work toward change in constantly evolving reality. In one of his works, Arnett (2015) points out that tenacious hope is a prerequisite to dialogue and that today, when we must finally learn to live with difference and prosper, the need for dialogue is global. Without hesitation, feminist practitioners and researchers answer to this need worldwide, laboring to initiate and drive social change (Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023). Hope is one of their commitments that has been central for decades.

There are several feminist texts that engage with hope directly or metaphorically. Among them is Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2009) “La Conciencia de la Mestiza” from 1987, in which “world-traveling”—being able to “travel” from one culture to another and simultaneously remain situated inside and outside communities and cultures—is presented not as a curse but rather an opportunity to resist hegemonic frameworks. Similar to Arnett’s (2022) theorization of tenacious hope, Anzaldúa engages with tensions and explores contradictions present in every liminal life to illuminate how existence at intersections and borderlands is guided by hope, which, in turn, is embodied in resistance to dominant paradigms.

There are other important contributions that illuminate hope, how it emerges, is sustained, and is politically charged in feminisms—for example, Sara Ahmed’s (2014) “cultural politics of emotion.” Ahmed (2014) describes hope as integral to feminism(t)s, grounded in the “present as affected by its imperfect translation of the past,” and realized through “collective working for change” (182–83). We are reminded that hope is integrated in political action: “politics without hope is impossible, and hope without politics is a reification of possibility (and becomes merely religious)” (184). Following Ahmed, there is hope in feminism—hope that brings people to feminism and hope that feminism embodies. Hope also is a premise of Black feminist thought (Collins 2000). The concept of intersectionality alone has been hope-generative and “has inspired vital feminist work and nurtured and inspired feminists’ struggles” (Martinsson and Mullinary 2018, 12).

In sum, we draw on our backgrounds to reflect upon the intersections of hope and feminisms. Attention to hope as a geo-temporally specific orientation in Arnett's (2014) theorization of tenacious hope leads us to consider the meaning that the idea of tenacious hope can take in various cultures. These meanings are tied to semantics of the word "hope" that illuminate certain contextual factors—historical, cultural, and political. We close this section with Evgeniya's reflections that Russian culture is steeped in beliefs about the precedence of fate over individual agency and about resignation before the power of current events and the course of history. The very idea of hope is controversial. On the one hand, what else is left when the agency is surrendered and individuals face the implacable reality unarmed? Hope should be the answer. Russian sayings support this gravitation toward hope to counteract the merciless whirlpool of time:

Без надежды – что без одежды. И в теплую погоду замерзнешь.

(Being without hope is like one without clothes—she gets cold even on a warm day.)

Надежда умирает последней.

(Hope dies last.)

These sayings portray a reliance on hope in sensemaking and an orientation toward the good—even in hard times. On the other hand, there is a subtle understanding that hope alone is not enough:

Из одной надежды не сшить одежды.

(You cannot make a coat only out of hope.)

In turbulent times, such as now, the importance of hope for individuals, groups, and society grows exponentially. But does it lead to action or inaction in a culture that does not believe in individual agency?

Questions

We ask four main questions and draw on our personal and scholarly commitments to describe how the emphasis on localities, ethics, and communication guide our discussions of tenacious hope and feminisms. Sometimes we provide a combined response to the question, but at other times we felt that the differences in our responses needed to be highlighted to render localities distinct. In those passages, we offer our autoethnographic stories to make the theories more concrete. These questions ask about (1) understanding the different tensions in tenacious hope and in feminisms that can develop new insights for praxis, (2) examples of where combined feminist and tenacious hope activism benefits self and others, (3) orientations toward the local that can reinvigorate Arnett's communication ethics and feminist ethics, and (4) ways in which feminisms and feminists can move toward tenacious hope.

1. Ron Arnett talks about different tensions that are inherent to tenacious hope. In what ways are these tensions similar to or different from tensions inherent to different feminisms with which we are familiar?

Some feminist advocates exposed fundamental contradictions that would mitigate against equality, but the approach seemed so radical and so impossible to change society (see Campbell 1973) that these views did not gain traction. Even more so, when the equality that seemed assured by means of legal and policy remedies did not happen, feminisms expanded to understand more subtle feminisms in which individuals believe that parity has been or could be achieved if women wanted it (see Sandberg 2013; Slaughter 2012; Rottenberg 2017).

For example, men in engineering espouse beliefs in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and profess that women should have the same opportunities in their engineering program (Buzzanell et al. 2023). However, these same men also say that women are being forced to enroll in engineering because of all the pressures—from mentoring, summer workshops, teachers and other socializing agents, and engineering programs in their colleges—and that, clearly, if women wanted to be engineers, they would not need to be coerced into enrolling in these majors. After all, the men say that they did not need any special programs, scholarships, units like “women in engineering” (Buzzanell et al. 2023, 10), and so on to join and remain in engineering programs. Such contradictions in worldviews and reasoning mean that these men can articulate all the DEI reasons for inclusion while their feelings about DEI and women’s membership directly contradict DEI efforts.

The plexus of these tensions has varying effects on the movement and its proponents and activists. Some are destabilizing, leading to misunderstandings between feminism(t)s locally and globally (see Ghodsee 2018; Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023; Tlostanova et al. 2019); others are more generative, resulting in novel ways of addressing complex issues of gender inequality. These tensions, realized in instances of (un)ethical communication and organizing, include but are not limited to self-other, individual-collective, family-work, imagination-experience, and others. They are logical continuations of our life conditions—political, geopolitical, economic, cultural—and simultaneously arise from our individual and collective ethical preferences. Others are the heritage of the movements’ social history. Together, these tensions are uncomfortable in that they make us pause and contemplate which extreme of the dichotomy we choose to honor and why and what/who is left behind when we make our choice.

Importantly, along with these tensions, the importance of locale-specific circumstances became salient, much as Arnett (2022) argued for tenacious hope. Arnett insists that “tenacious hope struggles against marginalization” (191) and concludes that “communication ethics as tenacious hope dwells in a home of ethical striving and unquenchable self-doubt, a unity of contraries” (195). Its ethical appeal, then, similar to feminism’s goals (Buzzanell 1994; Linabary et al. 2021), is that it “demands responsibility from and for many—including those not directly seated at the table of decision-making” (Arnett 2022, 18). Tenacious hope

aspires to change and transformation that unifies “individual achievement and concern for social life” (23). Intrinsic tensions of feminism and tenacious hope echo each other, contradict, and acquire new dimensions when interlaced. The facets of tenacious hope that stand out with each particular movement or group are geopolitically, temporarily, historically, and culturally dependent. In what follows, we present two instances—local and global—where the tensional nature of both orientations becomes clear.

2. What are some examples in which combined feminist and tenacious hope activism benefits self and others?

With affective, paradoxical, and dilemmic feminist approaches (e.g., Buzzanell et al. 2023; Harris 2016), we see everyday enactments of Arnett’s (2022) tensions, which he derives from the Scottish Enlightenment and compares to contemporary challenges that require a communication ethics response. We borrow the less verbalized sides of Arnett’s tensions—doubt, experience, responsibility, restraint, and vitality (which are part of assurance–doubt, imagination–experience, abdication–responsibility, progress–restraint, passivity–vitality)—knowing that a wholesale shift to another side is inadequate, especially if we attempt to integrate or extend beyond the opposites. Feminist research illuminates the tensions that are quite similar to the opposites with which tenacious hope struggles and offers partial solutions.

Patrice: In the US, individuals and organizations struggle with concepts that are difficult to research, publish, and understand, especially when dealing with language that is contested, like social justice, privilege, political stances, BIPOC labels, Whiteness, and white supremacy (Hanasono et al. 2022). For instance, the idea of privilege needs a nuanced approach or else it tends to be conceptualized and actualized as unidimensional, additive, and divisive. Individuals have difficulty envisioning the structural and institutional means by which privilege is deployed. Furthermore, much of the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) literature, including that which is feminist in orientation, phrases privilege as binary without articulating the multiple intersecting identities over the course of a lifespan (Hanasono et al. 2022). Without understanding these complexities it is difficult for individuals to construct how they might engage in allyship behaviors, meaning that the concept of allyship is more abstract than concrete to them. Such understandings may assist people to act more effectively as allies and understand the different ways of tackling unequal treatment of women and other vulnerable groups (Buzzanell 1994; Ro et al. 2023). These examples are from Western, US-centric findings, but the tensions are manifest at a global level, as well.

Evgeniya: The multitude of injustices and oppressions that feminists work to address, and even the very act of engaging with societal wounds from a feminist standpoint, results in uneasy questions of representation, speaking for/about others, and ultimately inclusion and exclusion in feminist methodology, scholarly work, and praxis.

Tenacious hope serves an important purpose in thinking about inclusion and exclusion in connection with feminisms globally. For example, in pursuing the goal of illuminating, problematizing, and finally ending the struggles of marginalized communities, one of the first questions feminists face involves who must be included in the process. The ethical and moral struggle that accompanies this particular dilemma is intense and often garners polarizing reactions. Tenacious hope, however, as an ethical orientation that demands meeting with and learning from difference, becomes a possible answer to antagonizing debates.

Tenacious hope and feminisms both guide us to lean toward multipronged inclusion. First, both feminist thought and tenacious hope insist on the necessity of putting a stop to “repetitive discounting of those different from us” (Arnett 2015, 1) and acknowledge their agentic capabilities (Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023). Feminism(t)s who/that exist and work within the transnational paradigm strive to include women at the margins into polyphonic dialogue, meaningful collaboration, and “knowledges of alternative and indigenous ways of organizing” (Pal and Nieto-Fernandez 2023, 16) in order to resist oppressive capitalist, neoliberal structures and processes, as well as militant patriarchy. Integrating difference and tenacious hope’s commitment to inclusion “demands courage to continue to meet and learn from difference” (Arnett 2015, 268).

The above-mentioned mutuality of feminist orientation and tenacious hope is not without a discrepancy: feminism(t)s add moderation to tenacious hope’s aspiration to inclusion. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2005) contended, it is impossible to achieve unity solely through a shared collective experience or similar treatment, given our varied circumstances. The view that exclusion can be avoided is illusory, and the very histories of feminism(t)s show that it is inevitable. Sometimes exclusions operate within movements, like the exclusion of Second World feminism(t)s from the Western feminist canon (Bonfiglioli and Ghodsee 2019), and lead to epistemic oppression (Dotson 2012; McKinnon 2016). Other times these exclusions are external, like the structural exclusions of women, feminine others, queer and transgender folx, and others, that feminist movements resist. Yet, there are instances when feminism(t)s exclude in order to protect, heeding Linda Alcoff’s (2009) warning to speak for others mindfully and remember that “the positionality or location of the speaker and the discursive context” (7) matter immensely and affect both the meaning of what is said and what is considered as truth. Echoes of this call can be found when tenacious hope “assumes responsibility for acknowledging the reality of multiple perspectives and learning from them” (Arnett 2015, 268), instead of working in silos. Acknowledging differences in a way that honors the multiple worlds we inhabit is where tenacious hope and feminist commitments overlap.

Embracing tenacious hope with its commitment to action, overcoming difficulties, and creativity is likened by Arnett (2015) to hard work, which we do with an open heart and open ears, ready to learn, though the outcomes are never guaranteed. Feminists globally have been long engaged in the hard labor of propelling social change and justice with no assurance of success. Additionally, deep engagement with tenacious hope inspires useful questions for feminist movements. When we act, who do we include/exclude, and at what cost? What

strategies do we stick to, and which do we abandon or reframe? How do we decide whether we want to be included into transnational collaborations or stay decidedly local and thus exclude ourselves from many forums where we can seek and find allies/accomplices? What do we do when we find ourselves excluded? We believe that these questions are always open-ended and cannot be separated from the time, space, available resources, and other conditions that enable or constrain feminist action. Yet, tenacious hope offers a new dimension to how these questions can be answered: in times when there is no “clarity of direction” (Arnett 2020, 9), we should keep hope that improved and more just social relations will eventually lead to a more equitable reality for people front and center in feminist communication.

3. How has the orientation toward the local been used most recently to reinvigorate feminisms?

As Evgeniya reflects on Arnett’s (2022) formulation of tenacious hope with facets of togetherness-solitude and extensiveness-precision, she notes that, in feminist work, every avenue and opportunity to engage in cooperation and adjudication of contentions must be explored.

Should cooperation be local, global, translocal, or transnational? Can there be alliances between feminism(t)s? Can we strategize and act across borders, or should we focus on our localities? Can there be a political “we,” and who should be included in it? These questions have multiple answers depending on who is asking and who are we answering with or for. One way to address them is by looking at tenacious hope that foregrounds situated action grounded in time, place, and embodiment.

Feminisms have always been situated in the local, but the local has been, at times, a privileged place that focused on White, middle-class women’s concerns and remains so even now as attempts are made to broaden participant bases and understand how awareness and maneuvering within socio-political-economic-cultural-historical locations by particular group members, or standpoints, provide broader worldmaking (Linabary et al. 2021). The local does not mean only those spaces and places but also the communication contexts within which feminisms struggle to urge equity. Scholars and advocates situate topics in the local. Hence, we must explore and contrast Second World and Global South feminisms with humility, knowing full well that such labels do not ever encompass the complexities and richness of the local standpoints subsumed by these labels.

Within the tensions of collective-individual and global-local feminisms, there have been deep divisions and tendencies toward grandiose cooperation (Mohanty 2005, 2013; Narayan 1998). Certain struggles of today’s world—ravenous expansion of multinational companies; the interconnectedness of the state, military, and corporations; the displacement and loss experienced by communities; forced migration; the rise of extreme nationalism and xenophobia; the widening disparity between the wealthy and the impoverished; and the degradation of the environment (Pal and Nieto-Hernandez 2023)—are ubiquitous and seem to require substantive collective effort to overcome. Yet, other features

of coloniality—Western hegemony in knowledge production and contemporary imperial capitalism—mandate separation of those negatively affected by them from those who benefit from global epistemic and socio-economic inequities.

Transnational feminism epitomizes global thinking about feminist cooperation *sans* hegemonic feminism as an overarching philosophy steeped in tenacious hope. It is an analytic framework that remedies previous failures in feminist movements' attempts at acting across borders. Partially articulated in Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal's *Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship: Refiguring Women's and Gender Studies* (2002), transnational feminism critiques the Global North's uniform understanding of what constitutes gender inequality and subsequent framing of what feminist politics should look like globally and locally (Pal and Nieto-Hernandez 2023; Nygren, Martinsson, and Mulinari 2018). Transnational feminism has been a successful orientation toward feminism(t)s working together to resist various oppressions, reclaim spaces for political action, and to establish long-term collaboration through focusing on relationship-building across borders. At its base, there is tenacious hope that urges one to be comfortable with difference, appreciate it, and ultimately celebrate it through the work of "learning from each experience—understanding difference and refusing to equate this with that" (Arnett 2015, 4). It is hope that "permits the meeting and understanding of monologic ground that matters to another" (4) and promises a chance to come together and build communities. However, in a quest to decolonize feminist philosophy, transnationalism has been subjected to critique as promoting Western-centric interpretation of nation and imposing uniform understanding of oppression (Bonfiglioli and Ghodsee 2019; Conway 2017).

There is power and hope in the transnational and global. However, there are times and conditions when the local must take precedence over the global, especially when the West, capitalism, and coloniality conveniently masquerade as "global." In such instances, Second and Third World feminists join Western feminist initiatives in acts of solidarity, yet Western feminists rarely support Second World feminists "back" (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021). Tenacious hope, then, comes to play a two-fold role: First, it serves as a base orientation that grounds and ties together local activism in times when local work is needed through "opening our imagination and putting forward fantasies, visions, and ideas about alternative inclusive and democratic futures" (Nygren, Martinsson, and Mulinari 2018, 5). Simultaneously, it binds people for transnational action in the future, allowing space for the local to strengthen and building "solidarity across conflictual locations, experiences, and visions . . . between and through diverse struggles" (5).

To have tenacious hope is to employ new forms of action that are not hegemonically approved (see Marling 2021; Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021; Khrebtan-Höerhager and Pyatovskaya, forthcoming) and move toward ideals that are not, in one way or another, global (e.g., gender equality in its Western understanding). Moreover, to have tenacious hope is to recognize that feminist visions are diverse, embedded in our present, and tied to our past in ways that allow for multiple struggles to unfold at the same time. Resisting the many faces of oppression thus becomes a concentrated attack on different fronts. Acting

locally is not a move toward isolation but rather a path toward asynchronous and multifold transformations with the recognition that “even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground” (Ahmed 2014, 189) and that regardless of setbacks or failures we continue the work in hope of the changes (Arnett 2015, 2020).

It might seem that focusing on the local intensifies polarization. Describing the concept of a communicative meeting, tied directly to tenacious hope, Arnett (2015) emphasizes that it is “a prescriptive ethical stance resistive to provincial self-preoccupation within an individualistic culture” (261), tying tenacious hope and communicative meeting into a framework that supersedes Western-centric individual autonomy. However, not all cultures and communities espouse individualism, and when we zoom in on certain localities, connection, reciprocity, and respect for another—hallmarks of tenacious hope—materialize as primary values. There are indigenous feminisms that honor “nearly universal connection to land, to territory, to relationships framed as a sacred responsibility predicated on reciprocity and definitive of culture and identity” (Green 2020, 4). Then, there are Second World feminisms that inherited a collectivist past and state-socialist women’s achievements in gender equality. Finally, there is Black feminist thought that radically shifted our understanding of community as based on competition and domination to one that centers connection, “caring, and personal accountability” (Collins 2000, 189). Polarization, therefore, only becomes real when we champion unbridled individualism and see others as competitors, instead of collaborators, allies, or accomplices (Kendall 2020).

For feminism(t)s, continuing to work locally while refraining from disregarding positions different from ours nourishes hopefulness for what is yet to come and creates space for alternative futures. When local activism becomes an element of the global, not a step down from it or a detached episode of resistance, focusing on the local is an acknowledgement of responsibility we have for one another right here and right now, including responsibility to understand each other (Arnett 2015). It is a form of ethical stance that forces us, following Kulpa and Mizielińska’s (2016) profound summation, to continuously question:

[W]hat do “here” and “now” mean—for you, for me, for us? How do we (re)construct them? What elements of a past are persistent in the present? In what form will the present survive into a future? . . . What will become history, and what will remain forgotten forever? Unspoken? Unwritten? (12)

Such grounding brings forward histories of places and spaces—their past and present geo-temporalities, with the borders created, reconfigured, dismantled, and re-drawn—and cultures in their permanence and fluidity as determining the kind of feminist work that needs to be done locally and often influencing how it is to be done. Tenacious hope, with its commitment to the present, doing the work, openly acknowledging our biases, and actively paying attention to surprising and revealing aspects of life (Arnett 2018), then, is realized through courage and resolve to take “a feminist orientation, a way of facing the world, which includes facing what we might not recognize, with others we do not yet know” (Ahmed 2014, 188).

Evgeniya: Locally grounded, hopeful feminism(t)s create new terms in their native languages that do not exist in English-speaking communities and through language a) establish their own feminist vocabulary to signify phenomena that were first recorded in these locations or concepts first formulated there and b) resist colonization of knowledge through the use of English that often “becomes the oppressive tool of controlling access to, and distribution of (academic) knowledge” (Kulpa and Mizielinska 2016, 21). For example, a term *зетерообре́чённость* (heterofatality) (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021, 134) was coined by an anonymous activist collective in Ukraine in 2017. It analytically captures “a social regime” (similar to heteronormativity) and also “the state of mind that determines people’s lives painfully and hopelessly” (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021, 134). Another word, *zboku*, is made up of two Ukrainian words—*збоку* (aside, next to) and *збоченство* (perversion-ness)—coined by ZBOKU, a Ukrainian activist collective. The collective conceptualized *zboku* as a “decolonizing gesture toward the word ‘queer’” (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021, 129) that distorts the very concept, “turns it over and places a conversation in the east instead of west, in the south instead of north, on the bottom instead of the top. . . . Because there is . . . (political) stubbornness in ‘zbochenstvo.’ There is mutual exchange, mutual support, and vulnerability that unite us all” (Zboku [збоку] n.d.).

Ahmed (2014) suggests that “the moment of hope is when the ‘not yet’ impresses upon us in the present, such that we must act, politically, to make it our future” (184), urging us that hope is tied to the present moment through our actions. Similarly, Arnett (2022) insists that tenacious hope “strives in spite of the circumstances, attending to locality with an aspiration for change and transformation” (39) and is expressed through action and not mere waiting that the future will bring about the needed change. Locally grounded feminism(t)s, therefore, are crucial to keep the hope for different futures alive.

4. How are feminisms and feminists moving toward tenacious hope, or how can they?

It is important that feminists, regardless of their geographic location, political leanings, and agenda, recognize the power of hope in their work and its lasting presence in feminist activism (Ahmed 2014; Martinsson and Mulinary 2018). Moving toward tenacious hope globally would mean acknowledging that feminist activist practices can and do take various forms and that the level of their visibility, (un)eventfulness (Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik 2021), and integration or lack thereof into other broader movement(s) do not define their feminist-ness. Commitment to working toward political, economic, and social equity for all marginalized groups in a given locale does.

For feminism(t)s, moving toward tenacious hope can look different depending on their locations, availability of resources, safety, and an array of other factors. Since tenacious hope dwells in “honest admission of partiality and responsive attentiveness to the revelatory, the unexpected” (Arnett 2018, 281), feminism(t)s can, when needed and depending on how these factors intersect, lean

toward one of the poles of the tensions inherent to tenacious hope and move farther from the other, engaging in creative interpretation of hope.

Evgeniya: Moving toward tenacious hope can be expressed through varying commitments. For example, “uneventful feminism” (Mayerchyk and Plakhotnik 2021, 127) in Ukraine embraces “anti-nationalist and anti-colonial agendas” (122), and the work of activist collectives that belong to uneventful feminism is defined as being unsuccessful—“opposing the capitalist meaning of success” (126) and not seeking mass-influence but rather finding alternative ways of socio-political engagement (Mayerchyk and Plakhotnik 2021). In some locations, moving toward tenacious hope translates into anonymity to avoid persecution, like Feminist Antiwar Resistance in Russia (Dubina and Arkhipova 2023). As tenacious hope “permits the meeting and understanding of monologic ground that matters to another” (Arnett 2015, 4), moving toward it, here, means rejecting neoliberal demand for visibility and, through remaining anonymous, attaining ambiguity and continuing to recognize and embrace differences. Both ambiguity and recognition of difference are crucial for continuing feminist work even in the most hostile of environments.

In other locations, since tenacious hope implies “simultaneous attentiveness to others and relationships” (Arnett 2014, 274), opacity becomes another way toward being tenaciously hopeful. Raili Marling (2021) stresses that opacity, even though it presumes “unknowability” (103), also involves relation and solidarity with those who we labor to truly know and see. There is already a glimpse of tenacious hope as the basis for opacity, as it is the movement toward others and “knowing one’s own position and learning that of others” (Arnett 2022, 24) that is important for both. Taken together, these examples show how feminism(t)s practice “creativity in response to existential conditions” (Arnett 2022, 58), or, in other words, embrace tenacious hope as an important orientation for feminist activism. Being tenaciously hopeful—locally and independently when needed—then inspires conscious collaboration with others transnationally and translocally.

Conclusion

As we bring our essay to a close and reflect upon tenacious hope, we have a greater appreciation for the multiple, conflicting, challenging, and invigorating areas with which feminisms contend—namely, lived precarities, constitution of knowledge, and ethics. Making tenacious hope visible as one of the feminism(t) commitments in times of utter despair, and recognizing various creative ways of engaging in feminist activist practices to enact tenacious hope, makes the very act of hoping in feminism a political act (Ahmed 2014). It also means we should refrain from imposing a uniform understanding of how the tenacious hope-feminisms nexus looks. With that, conversations surrounding tenacious hope as a feminist orientation would look different in different environments or might be impossible or almost impossible in these different environments at certain times. Yet, tenacious hope reminds us that feminism, regardless of the location, “fights ignorance, prejudice, and injustice in all of its forms, *using all possible strategies for*

change" (Ghodsee 2019, 243, emphasis added), and it is often in the unity of opposites, seeming incompatibilities, that tenacious hope dwells.

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