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# Global Activism in “Virtual Space”: The European Women’s Lobby in the Network of Transnational Women’s NGOs on the Web

## Abstract

*Web sites are a part of the organizational practices of women’s nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and thus a new source of data about their identities and responses to the structure of political opportunities. Using network analysis of Internet links between the Web sites of 30 transnational women’s organizations and content analysis of all posted material on the sites, this article explores how the European Women’s Lobby (EWL) positions itself among other transnational women’s groups on the Web and communicates its identity electronically. We find that the EWL places itself less globally than it might, which reflects its intra-EU mandate. More than other sites, it avoids using the term “feminist” but frames women as active and organized and emphasizes agency, politics, law, and global sisterhood as themes. Compared with other sites, family and reproductive health are under-referenced, indicating areas marginalized by the economic terms of the EU mandate. We conclude that the Web presence of the EWL reflects a reasonable picture of the intersection of feminist concerns with the EU structure of opportunity, making Web sites a useful window into feminist practices.*

The emergence of supranational and multinational organizations is one of the characteristic aspects of globalization (Giddens 1990). According to Berkovitch (1999), their organizational practices, resources, and texts constitute a global discourse, within which prescribed ways of organizing are being articulated and advocated. Feminist discourse is no exception to this globalizing trend. Indeed, the women's movement provides one of the most active and successful transnational advocacy networks sponsoring a global discourse, particularly by linking women and human rights (Keck and Sikkink 1998). This global discourse is embodied and diffused by diverse printed and electronic media, with the World Wide Web being the most global and versatile of these.

At the same time, global discourses are articulated by local actors. Even transnational organizations have a specific regional base and political purpose that reflect the conditions of their formation. As participants in this global discussion in the virtual space of the Web, feminist groups address the concerns that are most meaningful to them, given the political opportunity structure in which they are formed and through which they draw resources. Web sites are places for organizational identity work, and organizational identities reflect the conditions in which specific feminist groups work. The EU provides a distinctive contour of political opportunity that privileges economic issues and intra-European integration processes as its overarching concerns. Activists seeking changes in gender relations within the EU, we would expect, should present themselves on the Web in ways that reflect the opportunities and limits of these structural demands.

In this article we explore the self-presentation of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) on the Web as an expression of the intersection of transnational feminist discourse with the political opportunities presented by the EU. We take the EWL as a case study to explore the ways that Web sites are types of and places for organizational practices that indicate feminist perspectives and priorities. Like other organizational practices, such as degree of hierarchy or membership diversity, the construction of a Web site is only a partial indicator of what a group values and how it operates. Nonetheless, we argue that analysis of Web sites provides a new and useful form of data about an organization's identity and priorities because, unlike media representations of the group, it is self-directed and, unlike many structural features of the organization, it is relatively resource-neutral. Thus a Web site provides an open space for self-presentation to the rest of the world.

Empirically, we base our analysis on a quantitative content analysis of the EWL Web site in the comparative context of the sites maintained by twenty-nine other transnational feminist organizations.

We look at two specific aspects of the EWL's Web presence. First, by examining its links to other women's groups, we situate the EWL in the virtual network that the Web creates. In particular, we ask how central a role it plays in this network and to which types of groups (if any) it is preferentially linked. Second, we compare the EWL with other groups in terms of how it uses the word *feminism* and how it presents its goals. Using these two dimensions, we consider how the self-presentation of the EWL indicates the intersection of feminist identity and EU opportunity and creates a distinctively European form of feminist activism.

### Theoretical Context

Gamson (1995, 85) noted that "movements are media junkies." Social movements need and use all sorts of media to do their work. Of all existing media, the Web is the newest and, probably, the most underestimated. As the examples of Seattle World Trade Organization protests and Zapatista uprising suggest, the Internet may have enhanced strategic capacities of all social movements for networking, disseminating information, and mobilizing public support. All three types of effects are evident in transnational feminist activism.

Networking is enhanced as the rapid development of communication technologies accelerates the exchange of practices and resources between local and international women's organizations. Networking facilitates transnational feminist campaigns, such as the one against domestic violence in the 1980s (Walby 2002), and helps construct new organizations, such as the Network of East-West Women, which formed as a support mechanism for women's groups in post-socialist countries in the 1990s.

Web-based communication also has the potential for further increasing the diffusion of information and feminist ideas. Discourses (such as women's rights are human rights) and strategies (such as parliamentary list quotas for electing women) spread from the bottom up by using the Web to share knowledge of what other countries and movements are doing. Ideas and concepts such as gender mainstreaming, violence against women, and women's empowerment that are institutionally endorsed in documents, such as the Beijing Platform for Action, are also diffused from the top down to become part of local discourses. For example, these ideas are presented in organizational documents and Web sites as expressing local, national, or regional feminist priorities.

Finally, the electronic globalization of mass media elevates transnational visibility to a level never seen before. Many feminist organizations, even small ones with few resources, have created a Web

presence that reaches across multiple borders and great distances. Although the separation of social interaction from distinct places may impede engaged dialogue among the social actors (Miller 1992), even such passive forms of presence enhance a group's visibility to authorities, potential partners, and bystander publics.

Such potential opportunities for networking actions, diffusing ideas, and creating organizational visibility are neither unlimited nor random. We expect that organizations make use of the Web in ways that reflect their self-concept and institutional location. In this article, we do not have data that would allow us to measure what feminist organizations bring to or take from their presence on the Web. Instead, we look at the differences in the way that they represent themselves on the Web as being specific organizational practices that are important in their own right, because they create a nonspatially limited presence in feminist networks of knowledge and collaboration. This Web identity may also offer clues to the way that organizations respond to political opportunity and formulate their specific priorities in real space.

We specifically take the EWL as a case to compare to other transnational feminist organizations in Europe, the United States, and the global South (or "developing world"). In doing so, we focus on the particular shape that the opportunity structure of the EU gives to priorities and practices of the EWL. The concept of political opportunity structure is widely used in the study of social movements to describe the formal organization of resources and decision making in the political domain (McAdam et al. 1996). As a set of formal institutions with specific practices and competencies, the political opportunity structure provides channels that activists can use to advance their goals as well as barriers to raising particular issues or gaining access to specific power holders.

As Walby (2004) points out, the specific mandate for economic integration that guides the development of the EU both offers openings for broader social change and limits its reach. The market-based economic understanding of the EU gives it considerable leverage in areas of labor and commodity markets but officially leaves issues of health and social welfare to the member states to regulate. However, the intersection of employment and social welfare issues actually provides the union with a surprising degree of influence in the latter domains. Moreover, as a supranational regulatory body, rather than a mere intergovernmental forum such as the United Nations, the EU has developed a wide range of legal and political institutions that are becoming increasingly important in all European affairs. As the EU takes on more functions of a government in its own right and simultaneously accepts more members (the so-called deepening and widening

effects), the issues that integration poses become central to debates about the meaning of citizenship in Europe, especially for marginalized groups, such as women, immigrants, or ethnic minorities.

It is within this context of a European, economically led integration process, managed by EU political institutions, that the EWL has emerged as a transnational feminist organization. The EWL was founded in 1990 with the purpose of fostering coordination of women's organizations at the EU level, facilitating communication with the European Commission (EC), and establishing a permanent representation for women at the level of the European community. Although the EWL was formed with the active support of the EC, it was not wholly new or merely top-down. Even in the 1980s, women activists in Brussels had been seeking to develop participatory mechanisms for lobbying women's interests in the EU, both to advance transnational strategies that would enable women to challenge the power of the male-dominated bureaucratic and business elite and to develop genuine popular support for gender equity policies (Hoskyns 1991). The EWL served to integrate these existing groups into a network and provide a mechanism to address EU policy concerns, beginning from employment equity and working outward in a widening circle (Cichowski 2002).

The EU opportunity structure has also tended to channel feminist mobilization in administrative and legal directions. First, in the absence of other effective means of aggregating and representing popular interests (the familiar "democratic deficit" of the highly bureaucratic EU structure), nongovernmental organization (NGO)-based "lobby" forms of mobilization have democratic credibility and thus the potential to be highly influential in the EU. This is a favorable institutional context for the EWL to increase its perceived significance and translate this into actual policy gains (Elman 1996; Rossilli 2000). Second, women also found it easier to be elected to the European Parliament than to the national assemblies, forming a critical mass capable of advancing women's interests at the European level (Freedman 2002, 179). With the increased openings for women in mainstream political bodies, there has been a turn in feminist politics from radical separatist principles toward mainstream liberal political practices aimed at ameliorating the position of women through reforms of state policies (Walby 2002). Third, because the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has supreme legal powers, European citizens can make direct appeals to the EU Treaties and Directives, bypassing their national legal institutions (Walby 1999). This means that the ECJ is the core of a transnational legal opportunity structure built on "hard" law (treaties and directives) as well as "soft law" (coordination and persuasion) (Zeitlin and Trubek 2003). EU legislation

allows lobbying groups to use EU regulatory powers against their own national governments, thus providing a favorable opportunity structure for activists to use the courts to facilitate “boomerang effects” at the national level (Keck and Sikkink 1998). All three of these EU-specific conditions make the transnational arena available in Europe unusually open to administrative and legal types of feminist mobilization.

The specific emergence of the EWL within Europe also needs to be seen as part of a global mobilization of women activists in transnational advocacy networks (TANs; compare Keck and Sikkink 1998) that take up particular feminist issues, such as sexual harassment in the workplace or representation of women in politics and the judiciary (Zippel 2003; Kenney 2004). Transnational feminist engagement in policy-making processes is on the rise in many parts of the world (compare Alvarez 2000 on Latin America, Tripp 2000, 2001, on Africa). After the Beijing Conference on the status of women in 1995, the impetus to use transnational pressure to implement domestic policy reform through common strategic mechanisms, such as gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, spread around the world.

The emergence of such transnational organizations and social movements is transforming global norms and practices and doing so in and through networks. According to Khagram and colleagues (2002, 11), the characteristic form of relations in the nongovernmental sector is neither authority nor market, “but rather the informal and horizontal network.” Moghadam (2000, 66) suggests that “feminist networks tap into each other in an almost seamless web, with many points of intersection.” Indeed, transnational women’s organizations are themselves often made up of networks and then interact with each other, creating a highly complex and elaborate “network of networks.” Transnational networks and coalitions among feminists are facilitated by Internet and Web-based communications but also rely on the creation of an imagined community of activists with shared concerns that provides a sense of mutual support and discursive authority. Cichowski (2002, 236) argues that such global politics creates a “psychological or physical space” that facilitates participation of national women activists in transnational discussions and common projects. In its turn, this virtual space sets up the context for more permanent involvement of local activists in international policy processes.

The work of women activists in actual organizational spaces, for example, within research centers, commission-sponsored groups, and formal umbrella organizations, such as the EWL, has stimulated women’s increasing inclusion in the EU policy issues (Cichowski 2002). The EWL is thus rooted in the particular circumstances of its

creation and the local structure of EU political opportunities, as well as a participant in a virtual community of transnational feminist activism, spurred by the global emergence of networking opportunities and sharing a common discourse about political values and strategies. The EWL is a particular type of channel for women's advocacy efforts in the EU. Representation of women in the EWL is carried out "via delegates from nongovernmental women's organizations . . . which are operating at either the European or the national level" (Hoskyns 1991, 67). The EWL is partially funded by the European Commission, however, so it is not as truly an independent NGO as the name "lobby" would suggest. As an umbrella organization for national and transnational groups interested in influencing EU policy, it also does not represent the grassroots organizations that are active in many individual European countries at the state or community level and that may have a more radical feminist identity than these policy-focused, mainstream women's groups do (Ferree and Mueller 2004; Elman 1996).

Given the opportunity structure of the EU, which prioritizes economic concerns and intra-European integration issues, and the EWL's pragmatic orientation to effectiveness within this relatively favorable administrative and legal structure, the version of feminism that the EWL would be expected to present on its Web site would have both commonalities and differences with that offered by other transnational women's organizations. We hypothesize that a significant part of the EWL's Web discourse will be centered on formally organized and politically active women, the EWL will be particularly focused on intra-EU issues and other European-based groups, and the economic domain will be relatively privileged over other areas in which transnational feminist campaigns are important (such as violence against women and reproductive health). Because the EWL is in many regards not a typical feminist transnational organization, being an umbrella group that is not fully autonomous with a relatively narrowly defined mandate in a specified institutional opportunity structure, we would also expect its Web presence to be distinctive.

We argue that Web sites are a specific type of organizational identity work. Like other organizational practices, Web site self-presentation cannot capture all aspects of what groups do. Yet insofar as Web sites provide a window into organizational identity, they offer a new form of valuable data about how different groups understand and do feminism (which we define as all efforts to change the gender order to reduce or end the disadvantage of women; compare Ferree and Mueller 2003; Connell 2001). How specific feminist organizations go about doing their work is both highly variable and politically significant (Ferree and Martin 1995). As Martin (1990) points out, analysis of network

linkages of feminist organizations increases our understanding of the patterns of inter-organizational communication, exchange, and dependency among them. We thus use the EWL as a case to explore what its Web site indicates about how it understands and practices feminism, and to see how this virtual identity accords with its institutional location relative to the EU and to other transnational women's groups.

## Data and Methods

### *Sampling and Creating the Data Set*

The sample consists of 30 Web sites of international women's organizations—the EWL and 29 other transnational women's groups sampled from the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (2002–2003, volume 3) for preliminary comparison purposes. The population from which the sample was drawn is defined as women's organizations whose Web address is given in the *Yearbook*. The sample has been drawn using the stratified disproportional random sampling procedure. First, the population of organizations with Web sites was divided into three strata: U.S.-based, Europe-based, and those based in the global South (“non-Western”). Then a total of 10 organizations were selected from each category *regardless* of the actual number of organizations in this category, totaling to the sample size of 30 organizations. Appendix Table 1 lists the Web sites in the sample and provides some basic data about each. Although we do not argue that this selection is comprehensive, and its relatively small size limits any claim for generalizability, it is a representative sample within each subcategory.

### *Analyzing the Web Sites*

After the Web sites were selected, they were downloaded using TeleportPro and converted to ASCII format for uniformity and compatibility with the TextAnalyst software for content analysis. The limit on the program was set to include up to 9,999 levels within each Web site. Furthermore, all links on each site were extracted from HTML files using the program Essay11, converted to plain text format, and imported to MS Access, where outward links were separated from internal links (those within the Web site). Second, the filtered outward links were exported to MS Excel, where Web addresses were extracted from the hyperlinks and duplicating addresses were deleted, so that after this procedure only unique outward links were left. From them, *only* links to organizations in our sample were retained for each Web site (“within-sample” links). Although this is an incomplete picture of the transnational feminist ties of any organization, it is unbiased



because the subset is random. By balancing the number of outward and inward links potentially present for any organization, it makes comparison between ties from and ties to a group more interpretable. Finally, within-sample links were combined into a summary spreadsheet in MS Excel on the basis of which a sociomatrix with cross-links between Web sites was created. For each Web site, the sociomatrix contains links to other sites in the sample as well as links from other sites to a given one. This table provides the basis for assessing the type of position within the network of these groups that the EWL has.

### *Framing of Women and Feminists*

Ferree and Mueller (2004) argue that women’s movements differ in the extent to which they prioritize feminist goals and in their definitions of who “women” are. Moreover, how “women” are understood and framed discursively will always be central in determining women’s needs. Studying linguistic representation of “women” and comparing them to those of “feminists” on the EWL Web site is the analytic strategy we adopt to shed light on how the EWL defines women. In one comprehensive study of how “women” and “feminists” are framed in U.S. television news and public affair programs, Lind and Salo (2002) indicate that feminists are less likely to be framed as victims, more likely to be associated with the goals of women’s movements, and more often presented with agency words than women are. Furthermore, feminists are less associated with daily activities of women’s lives and more often presented within the public arena. We adopt the word pair method used by Lind and Salo (2002) based on discovering and mapping relationships between words, but our analysis differs from theirs in that our focus is on *self-representations* of women activists.

By examining how the EWL itself represents women and feminists and how this representation is different from that used by other transnational groups, we hope to identify the characteristic public self-image of the EWL. Our first analysis therefore focuses on the frames given by words used in relation to the words “woman/women” and “feminist/ism.”<sup>1</sup> The central premise of such an analysis of word clusters (collocation analysis), is that the macrolevel meanings of words can be estimated by the frequency with which words appear in close proximity or co-occur (Lind and Salo 2002). Using TextAnalyst and analyzing each Web site separately, we found all meaningful words appearing in the same sentence with “women” and “feminists,” graphed their frequencies, and then considered differences and similarities of framing “women” relative to frames used for “feminists.” We also compare the EWL’s usage of these two words in context relative to that done by organizations in each geopolitical region (Europe, United States, and global South).

For the second part of our content analysis, we create clusters of issue domains (Economy/Production; Family; Reproductive Health; Politics/Law; Targeted Problems; Technology/Communication; Agency/Mobilization; Global Sisterhood) to classify specific mentions of organizational interests and priorities across Web sites. This involved developing a set of fixed and uniform categories for coding significant concepts (a “dictionary”). A dictionary can be defined as a “set of words, phrases, parts of speech, or other word-based indicators . . . used as the basis for a search of texts” (Neuendorf 2002, 127–128). Our approach in delineating the set of categories was to make them emerge from the data. First we obtained a general frequency output for all Web sites (all lexical words in descending order according to the frequency with which they occur) and then grouped words from this output into coding categories based on the similarity of their meanings. There is no overlap between categories. If a word is included in a dictionary for one category, it is not used in any other dictionary, making all collocations among dictionary categories independent. The first five issue clusters can be understood as substantive policy interests; the latter three tend to represent concerns about how organizational work is or should be done. (Dictionaries used for coding are given in Appendix Table 2.)

The second step in this analysis was coding. The numerical coefficients for coding were obtained using the following formula:

$$R_{ij} = \frac{D_{ij}}{T_i S_j} * 1,000$$

where  $R_{ij}$  is the rate used for coding,  $T_i$  the total number of sentences on a Web site,  $D_{ij}$  the number of sentences from the Web site ( $i$ ) with words from the dictionary ( $j$ ), and  $S_j$  the total number of words in the dictionary ( $j$ ).

Thus,  $R_{ij}$  represents the weighted number of words from a given dictionary per 1,000 sentences. We chose to use rates for coding and not simple frequency counts to adjust for the dictionary size and the number of sentences on each Web site. These rates were obtained for all categories within each Web site.

## Results

We look first at the positioning of the EWL in the transnational community of feminist activists and then turn to examine how the words the EWL uses on its Web site construct a particular public identity for the group as well.

*Network of Web Sites*

The EWL is relatively weakly linked to other transnational feminist organizations. As Figure 1 shows, the EWL Web site has links to only three organizations in our sample: Network of East-West Women (NEWW), Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), compared to an average of 4.5 intra-sample outward links for all thirty organizations. As for inward links, or links that other groups make to them, nine Web sites in the sample have posted links to the EWL site: International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPWINTL), Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL), Equality Now, ISIS International Manila, International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC), Network of East-West Women (NEWW), Women against Violence Europe (WAVE), Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF). Four of the nine inward links are from specifically European-focused or -based groups (NEWW, WILPF, WAVE, and WECF), though it is interesting to note that only NEWW has both links from the EWL (outward) and to it (inward).

Link to: Link from:	digilander.libero.it	www.antenna.nl (wecf)	www.apwld.org	www.arrow.org.my	www.awid.org	www.awmc.com	www.awsa.net	www.bpwintl.org	www.cwgl.rutgers.edu	www.dawn.org.fj	www.eawhr.org	www.equalitynow.org	www.fawe.org	www.globalfundforwomen.org	www.ifuw.org	www.isiswomen.org	www.iwdc.org	www.iwfc.org	www.madre.org	www.neww.org	www.oas.org	www.own-europe.org	www.rainbo.org	www.themothersunion.org	www.wave-network.org	www.wedo.org	www.wgnrr.org	www.wilpf.int.ch	www.wluml.org	www.womenlobby.org	Grand Total
digilander.libero.it																														0	
www.antenna.nl (wecf)																															2
www.apwld.org																															5
www.arrow.org.my																															9
www.awid.org																															7
www.awmc.com																															2
www.awsa.net																															0
www.bpwintl.org																															1
www.cwgl.rutgers.edu																															16
www.dawn.org.fj																															5
www.eawhr.org																															0
www.equalitynow.org																															1
www.fawe.org																															1
www.globalfundforwomen.org																															7
www.ifuw.org																															4
www.isiswomen.org																															12
www.iwdc.org																															5
www.iwfc.org																															11
www.madre.org																															5
www.neww.org																															6
www.oas.org																															0
www.own-europe.org																															0
www.rainbo.org																															4
www.themothersunion.org																															0
www.wave-network.org																															4
www.wedo.org																															10
www.wgnrr.org																															4
www.wilpf.int.ch																															1
www.wluml.org																															10
www.womenlobby.org																															3
Grand Total	0	1	2	3	12	1	1	1	13	9	0	9	1	9	1	8	1	10	7	5	0	0	3	0	2	13	3	5	6	9	135

Figure 1. Network of Web Sites

The strong EWL–NEWW link may represent the continued influence of the East–West axis, which was so prominent in European politics during the cold war era. It is also interesting to note that the EWL has no links to U.S.-based organizations.

Examining global position in terms of these links, we see that the EWL is typically European in its networking but more regionally limited than most non-European transnational feminist organizations. Some organizations based in the United States post links to the EWL on their Web sites (e.g., CWGL, IWTC, WEDO). But the EWL is poorly linked to “non-Western” organizations, with ISIS being the only such organization posting a link to the EWL’s Web site and WLUML being the only non-Western-based site to which the EWL links itself (which may reflect the significance of Muslim immigrants in Europe rather than an interest in non-European forms of transnationalism). In terms of inward links, the EWL’s Web site is not marginalized in the network of transnational feminist Web sites, with almost one-third of organizations in the sample having links to EWL. Yet it has only one link from a global South organization (ISIS in the Philippines) as well as linking itself to only one (WLUML). Like other European groups, it is not at all well tied to non-Western organizations, and its links with U.S.-based organizations are unidirectional, with the U.S. groups linking to EWL and not vice versa. The “Europeanness” and intra-North position of the EWL’s profile of ties is thus very marked, in contrast to the prevalence of North–South links among other transnational groups, especially U.S.- and South-based. Thus, U.S.-based groups have an average of 5 (25%) North–South ties and 5.7 (20%) intra-Northern ones; European groups have an average of 0.9 (5%) North–South ties and 2.7 (9%) intra-Northern ones; groups based in the global South have 5.9 (15%) North–South ties and 1.4 (16%) intra-Southern ones.<sup>2</sup>

### *Collocations of Women and Feminists*

Across all 30 Web sites, “women” is used much more frequently than “feminists.” On all Web sites of Europe-based organizations combined, “women” is used in 26.4% of sentences, whereas “feminists” only in 0.2%; on all Web sites of U.S.-based organizations, “women” is used in 27% of sentences versus “feminists” in 1.13%; and on all Web sites in the global South combined, “women” is used in 21.7% of sentences, whereas “feminists” in 1%. Thus, the Europe-based organizational Web sites contain the fewest references to “feminists” compared to both U.S.-based and South-based organizations.

Consistent with this pattern, the EWL virtually always avoids using the word *feminists* on its Web site; it is used only 102 times (whereas *women* appears 33,670 times). Despite the scant use of the

word *feminists* on the EWL Web site, a comparison of how *women* and *feminists* are framed can be made.

In many ways, the two words are used very similarly. Excluding the link between "feminists" and "women" itself (a pairing that is the single most frequent one for *feminist* but rare for the much more commonly used word, *woman*), "women" and "feminists" are both frequently presented in combination with violence; "violence" is the third collocate of both "women" and "feminists." "Peace," "relationships," "violence," and "rights" are the four leading substantive collocates of "feminists" (other words that appear in the top 20 collocates often express a locus or form of activity rather than substantive concerns: magazine, university, national, European, information, coalition, organization, manifestation, initiative, foundation, federation, election). Additionally, "man," "family," and "Beijing" are in the top 20, but not in the top 5, collocations for "feminists."

Beginning from the other side of the equation, the two words most commonly associated with "woman" are "Europe/European" and "man/men," whereas "national," "member," and "country" are also all among the top 20. We interpret this pattern as indicating the focus of the group on the intra-European status of women, because of these five words only "man" is also commonly found on other Web sites. "Social," "policy," "action," "human," "society," and "EU" as well as the more market-led concepts of "discrimination," "working," "employment," "participation," "opportunity," and "development" are among top 20 collocations for "women" but not for "feminists." The focus on employment issues and working for legal and political change through social policy reform is evident in this pattern of collocation. Both "women" and "feminists" tend to be presented with active words, such as "action," "participation," "initiative," and "organization," but for "feminists" rather than for "women" these active words tend also to take more nongovernmental forms ("foundation," "federation," and "coalition" rather than "policy"). "Rights" is the fourth most frequent word used in combination with "women" and the seventh with "feminists," which may reflect the EWL's participation in the global feminist discourse of women's rights as human rights.

Given that "feminists" is too rarely used on the EWL Web site to adequately represent women's movements, the meaning of "women" becomes more multifaceted. "Woman" is associated both with "child" (1,119 times) and "working" (1,004) but also with macro-level concepts such as "discrimination" (1,426) and "opportunity" (1,058) and closely connected to both "rights" and "policy" (the fourth and fifth most frequent collocates at 2,366 and 2,057 uses, respectively). Thus "woman" becomes framed as a word associated with activism

and social change in gender relations, as “feminist” is on other Web sites. Not only is “feminist” more frequent (although still only averaging fewer than 1% of all sentences) on other sites, it has a more distinctive framing in relation to organizing, policy, and activism than it does in the EWL Web site.

However, there are also some important commonalities between EWL usage and that of the wider network of women’s transnational groups. In all 30 sites, “rights” and “violence” are frequently associated with both “women” and “feminist.” Feminists are associated with families and women with children, suggesting that neither word is understood as disconnected from its social context. Finally, feminists are especially associated with NGO types of social action (coalitions, federations, networks, or associations), which particularly positions them as agents and activists in the global community.

### *Content Analysis of Issue Clusters*

The second aspect of self-presentation is the stress put on specific issues. Table 1 shows coding coefficients ( $R$ s) based on the dictionary of issue clusters for all web sites under analysis. Comparing these clusters, we see that words related to agency (e.g., action, leadership, initiative, rights, strategy, program) used considerably more frequently in EWL web discourse ( $R = 11.59$ ) than in any other group’s self-presentation. The CWGL is the next highest in this dimension ( $R = 9.00$ ). This indicates that the EWL has a highly activist self-presentation, but this activism is channeled in the direction of politics/law (the EWL’s second most frequent cluster,  $R = 8.32$ ) rather than transnational coalition building, as it is for CWGL (whose top cluster is global sisterhood,  $R = 9.58$ ). Global sisterhood captures the NGO dimension of feminist organizing (words in this cluster include *civil society, civic, association, Beijing, Cairo, advocacy, meeting, grassroots, movement*, etc.). For the EWL, global sisterhood is important ( $R = 6.65$ ), but this cluster appears only at about the median rate for all 30 organizations and is eclipsed by its concern with politics/law (words in this cluster include *citizen, democracy, government, election, policy*, etc.). Thus the EWL’s focus on working in and through “the state”—the governmental structures of the EU and its member states—rather than thinking of itself as an advocacy organization or social movement in civil society is represented in its Web discourse.

Targeted problems is the fourth most frequently used category in the EWL Web site. It represents specific issues, especially those of violence and abuse (e.g., rape, prostitution, child abuse, domestic violence) and those intersecting with other issues (e.g., racism, famine, slavery, refugees) as well as generic mentions of victimization, injustice,

Table 1. Coding Coefficients (Rs)

	Global sisterhood	Agency	Economy	Family	Politics/ law	Targeted problems	Technology/ comm.	Reproductive health
EWL	6.65(13)	11.59(1)	3.74(4)	2.83(14)	8.32(8)	4.57(6)	3.28(11)	2.38(9)
European								
BPWINTL	4.93(24)	1.73(28)	1.72(11)	1.09(28)	2.02(27)	1.69(20)	1.77(22)	0.63(26)
EAWHR	1.27(30)	0.05(30)	0.04(30)	2.11(19)	0.06(30)	0.04(28)	0.33(30)	4.98(5)
IFUW	10.53(2)	5.99(13)	2.36(9)	3.42(9)	4.49(19)	1.82(19)	4.16(8)	1.14(22)
Mothers Union	5.27(22)	2.00(27)	0.63(23)	8.47(1)	1.36(29)	0.74(26)	2.60(15)	0.59(27)
OWN	7.03(12)	3.85(25)	1.58(13)	2.22(18)	2.99(24)	1.00(25)	4.37(7)	1.37(17)
WAVE	7.17(11)	4.95(19)	0.55(24)	4.50(5)	6.82(9)	5.18(3)	3.34(10)	1.30(19)
WECF	6.46(14)	5.22(17)	2.65(8)	1.45(25)	5.08(13)	4.02(7)	1.99(18)	3.78(6)
WGNRR	5.75(18)	5.13(18)	1.33(18)	4.42(6)	4.75(18)	2.07(16)	3.04(14)	10.77(1)
WILPF	5.26(23)	5.89(15)	2.94(6)	1.58(24)	6.08(10)	4.93(4)	1.83(21)	0.91(25)
United States								
AWID	7.83(10)	8.63(3)	2.34(10)	1.61(23)	4.89(17)	1.59(21)	4.66(6)	1.86(11)
CWGL	9.58(6)	9.00(2)	0.77(20)	1.91(20)	5.46(11)	3.71(8)	4.91(5)	1.73(14)
Equality Now	2.28(29)	6.40(11)	0.07(28)	3.66(8)	5.02(15)	2.03(17)	0.55(29)	1.85(12)
Global Fund	5.29(21)	4.14(23)	6.69(1)	3.05(10)	2.56(25)	1.44(22)	2.24(17)	1.42(16)
IWDC	5.78(17)	3.69(26)	0.69(21)	0.59(29)	10.30(3)	0.03(29)	3.85(9)	0.28(28)

*(continued)*

Table 1. (Continued)

	Global sisterhood	Agency	Economy	Family	Politics/ law	Targeted problems	Technology/ comm.	Reproductive health
IWTC	9.67(5)	7.44(7)	1.43(15)	2.43(16)	4.95(16)	2.97(11)	9.56(2)	1.78(13)
NEWW	9.82(4)	7.09(8)	0.11(26)	0.12(30)	11.98(1)	2.62(12)	8.23(3)	0.96(24)
OAS	4.67(26)	7.01(9)	1.37(16)	1.90(21)	5.06(14)	1.90(18)	0.82(28)	1.29(20)
RAINBO	6.22(15)	5.94(14)	0.06(29)	4.21(7)	3.73(22)	1.39(23)	3.19(12)	6.72(3)
WEDO	8.24(9)	8.08(6)	5.14(3)	2.30(17)	9.01(6)	3.03(10)	1.85(20)	2.82(7)
South								
APWLD	10.77(1)	8.24(5)	1.65(12)	1.65(22)	9.83(4)	6.12(2)	3.15(13)	1.07(23)
ARROW	5.78(16)	4.39(22)	0.63(22)	2.96(12)	4.08(20)	0.40(27)	1.52(26)	7.18(2)
AWMC	4.18(27)	4.00(24)	0.30(25)	1.31(27)	1.81(28)	0.02(30)	12.35(1)	1.30(18)
AWMR	5.43(20)	4.44(21)	3.51(5)	2.86(13)	4.07(21)	4.66(5)	1.60(23)	0.05(30)
AWSA	3.05(28)	1.54(29)	0.08(27)	1.33(26)	2.31(26)	2.42(14)	1.34(27)	0.12(29)
DAWN	9.92(3)	8.35(4)	6.31(2)	2.47(15)	10.31(2)	2.50(13)	1.53(25)	6.34(4)
FAWE	8.69(7)	4.94(20)	1.37(17)	8.45(2)	3.20(23)	1.39(24)	2.32(16)	1.28(21)
ISIS	8.24(8)	6.03(12)	1.57(14)	2.97(11)	5.21(12)	3.13(9)	7.90(4)	2.32(10)
MADRE	5.56(19)	6.52(10)	2.74(7)	4.54(4)	8.53(7)	9.33(1)	1.59(24)	2.45(8)
WLUML	4.88(25)	5.70(16)	1.12(19)	5.10(3)	9.25(5)	2.26(15)	1.90(19)	1.47(15)

Note: EWL, European Women's Lobby. Numbers in parentheses indicate an organization's frequency rank for the given category among all 30 Web sites.



and inequality. Focus on social problems, whether specific or generic, is relatively high in the EWL site compared to other Web sites (its rate is sixth highest for this cluster). The EWL site makes reference to economy relatively frequently as well ( $R = 3.74$ , which is the 4th highest rate among all organizations) but is only about the median frequency in references to family (14th) and reproductive health (9th). The latter is the least most frequently referenced category on the EWL Web site ( $R = 2.38$ ), and family is not much higher (2.83). Thus one can conclude that both these issues are relatively marginal to the EWL's self-presentation but that such marginality is less true globally of family issues than of reproductive health issues. The latter tends to have a few organizations highly focused on this concern, and a greater number of groups that scarcely mention reproductive health issues at all.

The EWL thus cannot be said to be avoiding mention of reproductive health or of family issues, but both are clearly of lesser importance to it than economic issues or other problems and political concerns. Given that the EU places family and social welfare issues at least nominally outside its competencies and in the hands of the member states, the EWL may see less reason to address these concerns. However, the relation between paid work and family and the limitations on reproductive rights in relation to the unrestricted free movement of citizens within the EU make these important and controversial topics in EU policy making, so it is important to note that the EWL does address them, even if relatively infrequently.

## Discussion

The EWL as a transnational women's advocacy group positions itself less globally than it might, particularly given that it is noticed and referenced by other groups in the United States. It defines itself as more narrowly European in what groups it links itself to, and even in this regard is not particularly strong in providing a wide range of links to Europe-based sites. Unlike some U.S.-based organizations that use their resources to position themselves as key links globally (e.g., WEDO, CWGL), the EWL Web pages are not portals to a wider world of women's activism. The fact that the EWL Web site is so poorly linked to organizations in the global South suggests that it stands somewhat apart from the dominant axis of North-South feminist discourse. The notable exception is its tie to WLUMML, which is a resource particularly important for Muslim immigrant women. This may reflect an acknowledgment of diversity within Europe more than a strong position in a global network in which ideas and strategies are transmitted in both directions.

In addition, the bi-directional tie with NEWW, the only such link that the EWL has, highlights the continuing significance of the East–West axis that was so prominent during the cold war era and is relevant to the current expansion of the EU to include a number of postsocialist countries. This East–West axis continues to define the position of the EWL, and to some degree this is true of other European feminist groups as well. This is a contrast to the U.S.- and non-Western-based transnational women’s organizations, which align on a North–South axis, especially clearly in the most well-networked groups. This pattern highlights two very different meanings of *transnational*: the intra-regional integration of nations that the EU provides in Europe (and which can also be seen to a lesser degree in Latin America, Asia, and Africa) and the globalization represented in the United Nations and in struggles over economic and political power to control development. The EWL presents itself transnationally in the former sense, but shows little inclination to define itself as transnational in the latter sense.

In addition, the Web discourse of the EWL is consistent with its structural position as a quasi-governmental transnational organization, receiving political sanction and resources from the EC. It is strongly oriented to promoting women’s involvement in mainstream politics and promoting policy reform; its discourse about social action places less emphasis on social movement mobilization and civic advocacy than on law and government. The opportunity structure for engagement with the formal policy structure of the EU is relatively favorable to such an “insider” strategy. Thus the Web discourse that the EWL offers is consistent with the opportunities available to it within European political and legislative structures and with its relatively weak links to women’s NGOs worldwide.

A conscious position as a “lobby” within the EU can also be part of the explanation for why the EWL avoids the word *feminist* even more rigorously than the sample of transnational women’s organizations as a whole. As an advocacy organization, the EWL is less engaged in developing an “outsider” presence of feminist grassroots activists and movements in civil society than in pushing particular policy agendas through specific insider tactics and long-term legal/administrative strategies. Thus it apparently has an investment in not appearing as “radical” as the use of the word *feminist* might suggest. Instead, the EWL deploys the word *woman* with unusually strong activist and agency connotations, and stresses the cluster of agency words in ways that suggest to us that it sees policy changes from the top as empowering for women and as expressing what women can and should accomplish.

The EWL also does not engage as often in framing its concerns to include family or reproductive health, issues that fall outside the formal remit of the EU, than it does in mentioning the economy and other social problems, including violence against women. *Violence* is indeed one of the words it most often associates with both women and feminists, and in this it resembles other transnational women's groups. Violence against women, no less than reproductive rights, falls outside or on the margins of the sphere of competence of the EU, but in the former case the issue has been more successfully brought within the discursive field in which the EWL presents itself as being concerned. Thus it would not be fair to conclude that the EWL excludes either the concerns of radical feminism or all issues formally outside the parameters of EU policy making, where violence against women would also fall. Instead, the self-presentation of the EWL on the Web suggests that issues that are actively under some sort of policy coordination (through the standard-setting process implied by the open method of coordination among member states)—as combating employment discrimination and violence against women both are—are the topics that draw the group's attention. Whether the similarity between the EU agenda and the EWL focus of discourse is driven by only one side or reflects a reciprocal process of influence is a question that this research cannot answer.

The issue of how "radical" the EWL thinks of itself as being is also raised by considering the scant use of the word *feminists* in its Web-based self-presentation. Yet this may not indicate either that feminism is of marginal importance or that the changes prioritized by the EWL discourse would not transform women's and men's lives profoundly; instead it may reflect the specific feminist repertoire and activities in the EU (Walby 2002). It does mean that the EWL's positioning of feminism is today less as a radical anti-system discourse than a more liberal inclusionary one, consistent with the expressed goals of the EU as a whole. Patricia Yancey Martin calls this shift one from "standing outside and throwing stones" to "coming inside and occupying space" (1990). Though this reframing implies increasing involvement in and by government institutions, as a strategy it may also allow substantive political gains that would ultimately transform gender relations (Walby 2002).

This examination of the self-framing of the EWL is also encouraging in considering Web site data as a window into the organizational understanding and practices of transnational advocacy organizations. The network position and types of discourse characterizing the EWL, as seen through its Web site, provide new support for a picture of it as actively engaging with a regulatory

state that offers a market-led opportunity structure in which employment issues and legal/administrative strategies would dominate. This is consistent with what we know about the EWL from other sources (e.g., Cichowski 2002) but enriches this picture with details that allow us to compare it with other feminist groups worldwide.

Helpful as this preliminary analysis may be, there is still a need more closely to define the specific nature of the targeted problems with which the EWL is concerned, allowing us to see when and how violence against women or racism and refugees are part of its discourse. Though recently the EWL emphasized the need to address discrimination based on the intersection of gender, race, sexuality, or age and strengthened its commitment to combating multiple discriminations (Williams 2003), the overall positioning of the EWL relative to global feminism suggests that there is still less attention to listening to and learning from women in the global South than there could be.

As a first effort to analyze the Web sites of organizations as important parts of their identities and practices, this study contributes to understanding the EWL as a specific kind of transnational advocacy organization, but this research has limitations that future studies may want to address.

First, our network analysis only looked at within-sample links. Future research should also expand the picture and examine links both with other feminist groups and with nonfeminist organizations. Second, understanding the practices of organizations' self-presentation on the Web will be much enhanced by analysis of non-Web organizational characteristics and practices. These can only be seen by studying the face-to-face workings of the group. Although Web sites are a novel and useful way to see what organizations present as a public face, there is also a need to understand just how this face is constructed. Finally, future research should compare Web practices with the other organizational practices by which advocacy groups create and maintain networks (e.g., conferences, newsletters, coalition partnering on political initiatives, etc.). Both of these latter types of analysis will require interviews with activists and observation of the actual spaces that the organization uses, not only its virtual space.

We conclude that understanding the Web presence an organization creates in virtual space alone provides clues to its identity and its use of this important new political medium. However, it is only the beginning of the process of understanding feminist networks, organizations, and identities in transnational political space.

Appendix Table 1. Organizations in the Sample

Name (acronym)	URL	Country where based and founding year	Total no. sentences on the Web site
African Women's Media Centre (AWMC)	<a href="http://www.awmc.com">www.awmc.com</a>	Senegal, 1997	8,065
Arab Women Solidarity Organization (AWSA)	<a href="http://www.awsanet.org">www.awsanet.org</a>	Egypt, 1982	2,856
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD)	<a href="http://www.apwld.org">www.apwld.org</a>	Thailand, 1986	10,332
Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)	<a href="http://www.arrow.org.my">www.arrow.org.my</a>	Malaysia, 1993	23,510
Association for Women in Development (AWID)	<a href="http://www.awid.org">www.awid.org</a>	Canada, 1982	167,848
Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region (AWMR)	<a href="http://digilander.libero.it/awmr/int">http://digilander.libero.it/awmr/int</a>	Cyprus, 1992	2,133
Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)	<a href="http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu">www.cwgl.rutgers.edu</a>	USA, 1989	16,774
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)	<a href="http://www.dawn.org.fj">www.dawn.org.fj</a>	Fiji, 1984	36,752
Equality Now	<a href="http://www.equalitynow.org">www.equalitynow.org</a>	U.S., 1992	10,106
European Association for Women and Health Research (EAWHR)	<a href="http://www.eawhr.org">www.eawhr.org</a>	Netherlands, 1996	3,101
European Women's Lobby (EWL)	<a href="http://www.womenlobby.org">www.womenlobby.org</a>	Belgium, 1990	85,425
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)	<a href="http://www.fawe.org">www.fawe.org</a>	Kenya, 1992	27,580
Global Fund for Women	<a href="http://www.globalfundforwomen.org">www.globalfundforwomen.org</a>	U.S., 1987	15,241

(continued)

Appendix Table 1. (Continued)

Name (acronym)	URL	Country where based and founding year	Total no. sentences on the Web site
Inter-American Commission of Women	<a href="http://www.oas.org/CIM">www.oas.org/CIM</a>	U.S., 1928	28,264
International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPWINTL)	<a href="http://www.bpwintl.org">www.bpwintl.org</a>	U.K., 1930	3,562
International Federation of University Women (IFUW)	<a href="http://www.ifuw.org">www.ifuw.org</a>	Switzerland, 1919	27,841
International Women's Democracy Center (IWDC)	<a href="http://www.iwdc.org">www.iwdc.org</a>	U.S., NA	4,232
International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC)	<a href="http://www.iwtc.org">www.iwtc.org</a>	U.S., 1978	11,524
ISIS International—Manila (ISIS)	<a href="http://www.isiswomen.org">www.isiswomen.org</a>	Philippines, 1974	124,131
MADRE	<a href="http://www.madre.org">www.madre.org</a>	U.S., 1983	20,820
The Mother's Union	<a href="http://www.themothersunion.org">www.themothersunion.org</a>	U.K., 1876	18,021
Network of East-West Women (NEWW)	<a href="http://www.neww.org">www.neww.org</a>	U.S., 1990	1,191
Older Women's Network-Europe (OWN)	<a href="http://www.own-europe.org">www.own-europe.org</a>	Italy, 1993	4,374
Research, Action, and Information Network for the Bodily Integrity of Women (RAINBO)	<a href="http://www.rainbo.org">www.rainbo.org</a>	U.S., NA	2,228
Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)	<a href="http://www.wgnrr.org">www.wgnrr.org</a>	Netherlands, 1978	18,562
Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)	<a href="http://www.wecf.org">www.wecf.org</a>	Netherlands, 1992	8,713
Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)	<a href="http://www.wave-network.org">www.wave-network.org</a>	Austria, 1994	8,713
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)	<a href="http://www.wedo.org">www.wedo.org</a>	U.S., 1990	63,666
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)	<a href="http://www.wilpf.int.ch">www.wilpf.int.ch</a>	Switzerland, 1915	23,828
Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)	<a href="http://www.wluml.org">www.wluml.org</a>	France, 1985	27,093

Appendix Table 2. Dictionaries Used for Coding

	Agency (25)	Economy (31)	Family (29)	Global sisterhood (53)	Politics/law (22)	Reproductive health (36)	Targeted problems (33)	Technology/communications (31)
Action	Bank		Adultery	Activism	Administration	Abortion	Apartheid	Broadcast
Active	Budget		Brother	Activist	Citizen	Birth	Child abuse	Communication
Activity	Business		Care	Advancement	Congressmen	Birth control	Child labor	Computer
Agency	Capital		Child	Advocacy	Court	Birthrate	Discrimination	Cyber
Dignity	Capitalism		Child care	Advocacy network	Democracy	Body	Domestic violence	Cybercafe
Emancipation	Cash		Child support	Alliance	Election	Breast cancer	Drugs	Cyberspace
Equality	Commerce		Daughter	Association	Government	Breastfeeding	Environment	Digital
Experience	Corporation		Divorce	Beijing	Illicit	Cancer	Exploitation	Electronic
Freedom	Currency		Family	Cairo	Judge	Clinic	Famine	Email
Hegemony	Dollar		Father	Campaign	Judicial	Contraception	Gender inequality	Engineering
Implement	Economy		Granddaughter	Caucus	Law	Disease	Illiteracy	Information
Initiative	Employment		Grandfather	Cedaw	Legal	Doctor	Inequality	Information age
Justice	Enterprise		Grandmother	Civic	Legislation	Epidemic	Injustice	Information society
Leadership	Entrepreneur		Grandson	Civic arena	Legitimate	Family planning	Militarism	Internet
Liberal	Finance		Home	Civil society	Nation-state	Fertility	Nuclear weapons	Journal
Liberation	Fund		Household	Club	Parliament	Health	Oppression	Listserv

(continued)

Appendix Table 2. (Continued)

Agency (25)	Economy (31)	Family (29)	Global sisterhood (53)	Politics/law (22)	Reproductive health (36)	Targeted problems (33)	Technology/communications (31)
Liberation	Fund	Household	Club	Parliament	Health	Oppression	Listserv
Liberty	Income	Housewife	Colleague	Policy	Hospital	Pornography	Magazine
Oppose	Inflation	Husband	Committee	Policymaker	Illness	Poverty	Media
Practice	Investment	Kid	Conference	Politics	Immunization	Prostitution	News
Program	Loan	Kin	Delegate	Prime Minister	Infant mortality	Racism	Newsgroup
Protest	Market	Kindergarten	Discuss	Republican	Malnutrition	Rape	Newsletter
Rights	Money	Marriage	Education	Senator	Maternal mortality	Refugee	Newspaper
Socialist	Pension	Married	Empower		Maternity	Sex inequality	Online
Solution	Retirement	Mother	Feminist network		Medical	Sexual harassment	Radio
Strategy	Tariff	Nursery	Forum		Medication	Sexual violence	Science
	Tax	Polygamy	Friend		Medicine	Sex worker	Scientist
	Underdeveloped	School	Fundraising		Nursing	Slavery	Technology
	Unemployment	Son	Grassroots		Nutrition	Terrorism	Television
	Wages	Wife	Humanitarian		Pregnancy	Toxic waste	Video
	Wealth		Liaison		Prescription	Unemployment	Web
	Welfare		Link		Reproduction	Victim	Web site
			Meeting		Reproductive rights	Violation	
			Mobilization		Sexual	War	



Appendix Table 2. (Continued)

Agency (25)	Economy (31)	Family (29)	Global sisterhood (53)	Politics/law (22)	Reproductive health (36)	Targeted problems (33)	Technology/communications (31)
			Movement		Std		
			Nairobi		Sterilization		
			Negotiate		Unwanted pregnancy		
			Network				
			NGO				
			Organization				
			Partner				
			Project				
			Resource				
			Responsibility				
			Seminar				
			Sister				
			Sisterhood				
			Social				
			Society				
			Solidarity				
			Training				
			UNIFEM				
			Voice				
			Volunteer				

Note: All possible derivatives of the words in the dictionaries were included into analysis.

## NOTES

1. Throughout this and the next section, the key words in quotation marks indicate lexical groups: “woman/women” and “feminist/feminists/feminism.”
2. Numbers in parentheses are rounded percentages of all possible links between two corresponding groups of sites.

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