

**ON-LINE IDENTITIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS:
NETWORKS OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST WEBSITES**

*“Feminist networks tap into each other in an almost
seamless web, with many points of intersection.”*

Valentine Moghadam (2000:66)

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Abstract: Transnational women’s organizations are argued to be important vehicles for the spread of feminist ideas globally, and the websites produced by these organizations have put a very visible public face on women’s networking around feminist issues. Just how different women’s organizations use the web to connect with each other and to present their collective identity as an organization to the global public is not known. This paper provides a preliminary look at thirty such websites in order to see how they network among themselves and choose language to put on their sites that offers different degrees and versions of feminism.

ON-LINE IDENTITIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS: NETWORKS OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST WEBSITES

1.0 Introduction

Gender relations are changing around the world, as struggles over the appropriate roles and responsibilities of women and men become ever more ubiquitous. A hundred years ago there were also international challenges to the subordination of women to men, as women around the world mobilized to demand education, employment and political rights. But the global feminist mobilization happening today is different in several important, interrelated respects from its precursors.

First, the organizing taking place at the turn from the 20th to 21st century is far more transnational than international. At the turn of the previous century, feminist organizations at the global or regional level were largely inter-national umbrella groups, in the sense their members were national organizations. Women became part of the international movement by participating in a national movement, and only the leadership met each other face-to-face in international conventions. Political positions were developed through votes taken by member organizations at these conventions, and national politics and national interests regularly threatened the cohesion of the whole. Not only middle class women's organizations but socialist groups formed first as national bodies and then were tied together at the inter-national level.

By contrast, the transnational feminist organizing at the turn of this more recent century is more typically organized by interests than by nation: Groups deal particularly with concerns about women's education or health or reproductive rights, they contest trafficking of or violence against women, and they link women concerned with issues of

development, human rights, social justice and other broad issues who share a perspective rather than a nationality. The activists are linked together organizationally from the grassroots up; individuals belong to groups that transcend national borders and groups with shared concerns link into networks across nations, sometimes within language or regional boundaries and often even reaching beyond these limits.

Second, the internal structure of most women's organizations around 1900 was formal and based on a model of representative democracy. National organizations typically had elected leadership, a committee structure and made decisions through voting; the international organizations that linked these national groups also worked by taking votes of their member organizations. At this time, women's voting was itself a radical political act, and using formal electoral and committee systems from which women had historically been excluded was a means by which the organizations contributed to the political skills and sense of empowerment of their members.

But already by 1960, women's voting was normalized as part of democracy that could be largely taken for granted (Ramirez/Soysal/Shanahan 1997). Newer forms of participatory democracy were coursing through the new left in many industrialized countries, and anti-colonial struggles were generating authoritarian one-party states that made a mockery of formal democracy. In these contexts, formal democracy appeared more of a hollow shell than a radical claim on meaningful self-determination.

Thus, for feminist organizations at this later turn of the century, voting was not nearly as significant an act as political participation in more informal ways. The radical claim on democracy was that it should function in a participatory rather than representative fashion, and effective engagement in active policy-making demanded

resources of expertise and access (Leidner 1991, Alvarez 1999). Those who wanted to be radical and seek a long-term transformation of the system as a whole and those who wanted to be effective in the short term within existing political systems both channeled their feminist energies at the local level through informal, networked, grassroots organizations on the one hand and through professionalized service-provider and expert organizations on the other.

Likewise, transnational feminist organizations tended toward these two poles of informality and NGO-ization, each of which relied to a considerable extent on networks of influence rather than the formalized leadership roles and electoral decision-making of national political parties (Lang 1997). The network form became the innovative structure that could join both informal organizations and professionalized NGOs across national borders as well as within them. While all types of social movements in the post-1968 era of mobilization took advantage of the network model of organizing, feminist groups developed this decentralized “spider web” style most extensively and effectively (Keck/Sikkink 1998, Moghadam 2005).

Third, the development of new communications technologies at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century meant radio and telephone connections could supplement letters and face-to-face travel, but international connections relied primarily on the older forms of communication. Deep and enduring interpersonal ties were forged, but these were concentrated in elite circles, both within countries and in the world-system as a whole (Rupp 1997). The distinction between core and periphery among nation-states was echoed in the roles played by national organizations and individual leaders in international bodies. The leadership rested in the hands of the colonial powers and

feminists in these politically dominant countries set much of the agenda for international women's organizations.

By contrast, at the beginning of the 21st century it was already apparent that the internet was a powerful new tool of communication that changed what organizations and individuals could do politically (Diani 2000). Web pages were available on the internet for all to see, and effective search engines like Google could rocket a specific site from obscurity to influence in a very short period of time. Email and internet letters and petitions could organize individuals globally without the intervention of any national level intermediary group. Although resources still pose significant constraints on individuals' access to new technologies, the global South has been drawn into electronic commerce and communication at an astonishingly rapid pace (McCaughy and Ayers 2003). The spider web style of women's networking and the World Wide Web as a medium were well-matched, and women's organizing capacity expanded globally.

New strategic challenges as well as opportunities were thereby created. The decentralization of the network makes communication difficult to control. For example, national and local women's groups in Kenya and Bosnia struggled to keep their transnational allies from intervening in local problems around violence against women (be it stoning pregnant women or denouncing paramilitary rapists) in ways that discredited and stirred resentments against local feminists or inflamed nationalist and religious passions (Tripp 2006). As they and other activists discovered, when the internet rapidly circulates inaccurate information there is no clear place to go to correct it. Ease of access and decentralized flows of information not only allow more actors from the periphery to be heard but also make it harder for anyone to control what is said.

For all these reasons, networks – informal, decentralized and increasingly electronic – have become the hallmark of transnational feminist organizing in the present time (Moghadam 2005). According to Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink (2002:11), the characteristic form of relations in the nongovernmental sector today is neither central political authority nor market, “but rather the informal and horizontal network.” Organizing in transnational network form is not unique to feminism by any means, but it appears that feminists have been especially early and effective in developing such networks (Keck/Sikkink 1998, Moghadam 2005).

In this paper, I take a very preliminary look at a few of the transnational women’s organizations that are actively present on the World Wide Web, and examine their self-presentations in this new medium in order to see some of the opportunities and obstacles that are emerging for them as transnational actors. I use a small sample of the web pages produced by thirty transnational women’s organizations in order to examine the density of the network they form, the degree to which they could be said to be feminist, and the variation in the specific nature of their political identities. While I do not argue that these are statistically representative sites for feminism on the web, the range of organizations, their regional locations and their concerns is intentionally broad and inclusive and highlights the innovative quality of the internet as a locus for organizational feminist activities.

I first offer an overview of measures of internal networking among these sites and of the language they use to suggest ways in which transnational activism may differ from place to place and organization. I then focus on five specific organizations: DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era), the Center for Women’s Global

Leadership (CWGL, based at Rutgers University in the USA), WLUMML (Women Living Under Muslim Law), ISIS-International (based in Philippines and focused on electronic communication and networking) and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) to illustrate a variety of ways that feminist organizations use their web pages to present themselves and to link to others. I argue that these varying uses may provide important clues to their feminist identities and their transnational networks.

2.0 Defining feminism and internet networks.

2.1 Feminism and women's organizations

In order to analyze the ways that feminism has become organizationally present on the web, there must first be a measure of consensus about the definition of what feminism is and how it might be manifested. I argue that feminism is seen in all efforts to challenge and change both the gender relations that subordinate women to men and the gender relations among men or among women that contribute directly or indirectly to such subordination. Feminism can be distinguished from women's movements conceptually in that mixed-gender social movements and organizations may also embrace feminist beliefs or act according to feminist principles: feminism is a goal and a political project. While feminism often and most appropriately speaks to women as a constituency, this is a choice, not something true by definition.

Women's movements, by contrast, are defined as organizations focused on women as a constituency; they address women in gendered terms (as women, wives, mothers, sisters, etc.) and coordinate women's political activity as women. Not all women's movements are feminist – some may oppose feminism and others may be indifferent to it (Ferree and Mueller 2004). This, too, is a choice rather than something

true by definition. Therefore, the actual empirical relationship among feminism as a goal and women as a constituency is something that varies, both because feminism is spreading into ever more “places and spaces” (Alvarez 1999) and because feminist identity may be strategically embraced or kept at a distance.

The degree to which any particular women’s movement or women’s organization is feminist is therefore a research question, and what feminism means to any particular group is allowed to vary. My focus is on transnational women’s organizations, namely those women’s groups that are identified as international in membership and scope, and I attempt to identify the extent and specific nature of their feminism by looking at the language they use on their websites, since they have a unique opportunity here to present themselves to a global public.

I use three different words as initial clues to organizational identities: “feminist” as the most radical and specific claim to this identity; “gender” as a term that has become relatively institutionalized after the Fourth Women’s World Conference in Beijing in 1995 and that connects to its strategic policy platforms (e.g. gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting) and to feminist theory; “woman/en” as the most general label for their constituency and whose meaning can only be seen in relation to other words that are or are not used with it (e.g. family, child, rights, equity, movement).

2.2 Networks and organizational ties

Following Keck and Sikkink’s influential definition, I define a transnational advocacy network (TAN) as a set of “relevant actors working internationally on an issue who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services. Activists in networks try not only to influence policy outcomes

but to transform the terms and nature of the debate.” (Keck/Sikkink 1998: 3). Feminist TANs share feminist values and discourses, and while the specific sort of data about network ties that I am examining here does not allow me to look at resources or services that might be exchanged off-line, I treat the linking of pages to one another on line as a form of endorsement and virtual alliance. Putting up a link in the public space of a webpage declares that the organization doing the linking has common interests and values with the one to whom it links itself.

This virtual “embrace” does not necessarily mean that the two groups are linked in off-line relationships of collaboration, but it does imply a desire to be associated -- the groups with links outward to others are claiming them as part of their virtual world and the groups to which others have frequently linked themselves have prestige in the network as a result. I define the centrality of a group within a network as the sum of its inward and outward links to others, indicating that others want to be linked to it (it has prestige in their eyes) and it wants to be linked to the others (has high positive regard for them).

While networks are certainly much more, and potentially much different, from their on-line manifestations, it is also important to know just how groups do portray themselves on line. In an era in which more and more of the contacts with a group may be through its website and when public information about groups is stored and accessed on line, the on-line identities of groups are what people around the world most readily see. Because the structure of a transnational network is decentralized and open to members in many different physical locations, the identity presented on the web may have implications for how a wide variety of others see an organization. Unlike media

depictions, web pages offer an unmediated look at how the group chooses to present itself and with whom it cares to be seen as being associated. Using both language and links, the identities of the women's organizations are constructed and presented in a transnational space that is literally open to the view of the whole world.

I would expect these identities as presented to also relate to the activities and internal structures of the groups in the off-line world as well, but this question goes beyond the limits of the data available here; it remains something I can only hope to pursue in future work. Nevertheless, when women's movement organizations bring their discourses online, they demonstrate their own collective identity, participate in spreading values and understandings that matter to them, and potentially create transnational communities of discourse.

3.0 Data and methods

3.1 Sampling

This sample consists of 30 organizations selected by disproportional stratified random sampling (10 US-, 10 Europe- and 10 "Third-World"-based) from the population of international women's organizations whose URLs are given in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* 2002-2003 (the sampled groups are listed in Appendix 1). While these groups are counted by the Yearbook as being both international and "women's" organizations, they are not necessarily self-described as feminist, nor do they have to include any particular feminist language or goals to be included in the sample, since one goal of the research is to see the extent of variation in just such factors. The country given in the *Yearbook* as the site of the headquarters of the organization is taken as its global location. The websites were downloaded using *TeleportPro*, with the limit

on the program being set to include up to 10,000 levels within each website. The sample is unfortunately small, since my resources for this study were also quite limited. One implication of this small size is a less than ideal representation of the variety of non-western websites and regional locations.

Within this larger sample of websites, I select five to represent something of the flavor of different types of organizations and regions of the world. Three focus on the global South: DAWN is based in Fiji but largely represents radical/critical perspectives on development from women across the Third World; ISIS-International Manila is an organization that stresses electronic communications among women in the global South. and WLUMML is based in France but primarily organizes women in Africa and the Middle East, as well those originally from these regions and other majority Muslim countries who are living in Europe. Two are based solely in the global North and are in each case the most abundantly linked groups of their region: CWGL in the US is based in an academic institution- Rutgers University Women's Studies – but led by a single prominent transnational activist, Charlotte Bunch. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) in Europe is funded by the European Union Commission and links national groups in a more formal umbrella structure. WLUMML includes both national affiliates (non-western) and individual, direct members (mostly in Europe).

3.2 Measures

The two key indicators of on-line identities in this sample of 30 organizations are their choices of links and choices of language. Hyperlinks are an economical way of adding material to a site and gaining attention for it as well as a means of demonstrating the collective identity of the group through the nature of the particular links made.

Language, specifically the way that words are used in context, is a way to express identity directly and to convey, sometimes unintentionally, the meaning attached to the words that are chosen. As transnational organizations, all of these women's groups have all or most of the website available in English, and the English version of the website is analyzed here.

To analyze the hyperlink structure of these transnational women's groups on the web, all links on each website were extracted from the downloaded HTML files using the program *EssayII* and imported to *MS Access* where the outward links were separated from internal links ("within-sample" hyperlinks). The number of hyperlinks among the websites, separately and together, was calculated using *MS Excel*. This paper focuses exclusively on the within sample links of our organizations, thus equating the potential network sizes for all groups and allowing the density of the overall network to be calculated.

The measure of network density indicates how many ties actually exist of those that are theoretically possible. Within the network, number of incoming ties (links that other organization make to it) is an indicator of a group's *prestige* and the number of outgoing ties (links to other groups on its own website) is an indicator of the extent to which *outreach* (and outreach to different parts of the world) is an important part of a group's identity. The sum of both measures indicates the relative *centrality* of a particular group within the sample overall

In addition to hyperlinks, language choices offer a way to see how an organization wishes to be perceived in public. Using *TextAnalyst* software for quantitative content analysis, all lexical words appearing in the same sentence with "woman(-en),"

“feminist(s)” and “gender” were identified. Same-sentence locations are what are defined here as “collocations” for the analysis. When words occur in recurrent collocations it shows “the associations and connotations they have, and therefore the assumptions that they embody” (Stubbs 1996:172).

The collective identity of each group can thus be seen as expressed in part by the frequency and context in which the words “woman(-en),” “feminist(s)/m” and “gender” are used on a group’s website. These three “pivot words” are tallied in regard to their relative frequency by region and by specific sites to see the degree to which a more or less explicit feminist identity is embraced. Each pivot word is then also used in a regional and site-specific collocation analysis, to see what other words are used most often in conjunction with it (that is, in the same sentence) and the meaning of each word in context is compared in this way. Thus how egalitarian or familial a context of meaning is given to “woman” or what particular issues are associated with feminism says something about the way the group presents itself to the world. Each of the three pivot words may resemble each other to varying degrees, using the pattern of collocations to see such resemblances, but each of them is also expected to carry its own distinctive meaning as well.

“Woman/women” is taken as a neutral word that acquires different shades of meaning depending on its semantic environment. A more “conservative” version of woman/women would locate this word in relation to “family, man, child” and more “liberal” reading of woman would place it in relation to “individual, rights, equality.” Either or both of these contexts may be resonant for a specific women’s organization, and thereby tend to express the collective identity of what it understands as its constituency.

By contrast, “feminist(s)/feminism” is a more controversial word that suggests a more radical identity. Inclusion or exclusion of the word feminist is likely to be a conscious decision on the part of the organization and so can be regarded a critical element of the web-based identity of organizations that choose to use it. The more frequent the use of the word “feminist,” the more radical the group’s identity, while groups that avoid this term as “too radical” for them may in fact put more political meanings on woman or gender instead.

The word “gender” has two related social contexts “off-line” that may influence how it is used to construct a group’s on-line identity. On the one hand, it has gained “official” transnational status after the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995. Usage of the word “gender” can indicate a group’s identification with the Beijing Platform for Action, where it figures prominently and controversially. This would make it a top-down, policy-focused word but also one that has the meaning of challenging gender relations. “Gender” therefore can imply a collective identity that is feminist in intent, even if not in explicit self-labeling. On the other hand, “gender” is a term of academic feminist discourse, developed in English-language theoretical writing, and may also indicate a discourse about women that is institutionally anchored in universities and conferences. Both the off-line worlds of academic theory and UN-centered policy-making are transnational contexts, so the relatively frequent use word “gender” expresses a more transnationally-defined collective identity.

4.0 Results

4.1 The network of hyperlinks within the sample

Overall, the density of the network formed by these women’s organizations is not

very great. The estimated size of the network is 135 which is the total number of hyperlinks among the 30 websites. The network density $\Delta = 135/30*29 \approx 0.16$. Since the possible values of Δ range from 0 to 1, the network among these 30 organizations created only 16% of all possible “within-sample” hyperlinks. The overall centralization index for the network ($C_A = 0.34$) suggests that the network is decentralized and *not* dominated by one or two exceptionally central actors receiving and/or initiating a disproportionate number of ties. Figure 1 shows the matrix of ties among all the organizations of the sample; the scores for the rows represent the total number of outgoing links from that group and thus its relative investment in outreach while the scores for the columns indicate the incoming links forged to these groups by others and thus their relative prestige within the network.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Comparing individual organizations in terms of their prestige shows that organizations in the US (CWGL and also WEDO) draw the most links at 13 (of 29 theoretically possible), but the EWL (9), DAWN (9) and ISIS (8) also have substantial prestige, while WLUMML is only moderately prestigious (6 incoming links). Twelve of the sampled organizations have little or no prestige (0 or 1 link made to them) in this network. Thus the organizations on which I focus cannot be said to be “typical” but are prominent transnational actors.

The diversity in extent of outreach is also considerable. Here also CWGL emerges as a leader, with 16 links to organizations in the sample, compared to only 12 each from ISIS-International and the International Women’s Tribune Center (IWTC), both of which have establishing networks transnationally and fostering internet communications among

women as part of their core mission. WLUML is also an active networker, with 10 outgoing links, but DAWN is more modestly connected (5 outgoing links). The EWL is distinctive in that it does little outreach (only 3 outgoing links in this sample) relative to both the prestige it has (9 incoming links) and in comparison to other groups based in the US and in Third World countries. Rather than lacking interest in networking, the EWL evidently focuses its attention on reaching out regionally within the EU (cf. Pudrovska/Ferree 2004).

This finding underlines the fact that transnational networking may be more or less regional in its scope, and suggests that more research is needed on where and how regional networks emerge as significant players in transnational feminist politics. Melinda Adams, for example, suggests that linkages within the African Union have been critical on that continent (2006) and Sonia Alvarez has emphasized the role that intra-regional networks play in Latin America also (1999). Not merely resource disparities but also differences in the extent to which they understand themselves to have a global rather than regional focus may characterize women's organizations in different parts of the world. In this particular sample, which is not large enough to draw regional comparisons within the global South, only Europe emerges as putting emphasis on an intra-regional form of transnationalism.

4.2 Regional differences in language choice

Both the three self-descriptive pivot words (woman, gender, feminist) and the context of meaning surrounding each of these words (collocations) differ by region. Overall, the frequency with which "woman" is used (in just over 25% of all sentences in all 30 sites together) far outweighs the use of either "gender" (5% of sentences) or

“feminist/m” (only a bit over 1%). As Figure 2 shows, these commonalities are modified only slightly by region. The websites of the global South use “woman” in somewhat fewer sentences (only about 20%) and US sites are the ones most likely to include both gender (close to 8%) and feminist (but still not in even 2% of sentences). The European sites are least likely of all to use the word “feminist/feminism” (in less than half a percent of sentences).

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The word “gender” may therefore deserve its reputation as being a “western” concept, but “feminist/m” does not, since sites based in the global South are more likely to include this word than European ones are. “Feminist” is actually used most frequently by DAWN, which proudly claims to offer a radical and critical perspective on development issues. The term “feminist” is also embraced more by WLUMML, which may reflect this organization’s strategic choice to seek allies on the basis of this identity, while the organization would likely be seen as a dangerous challenger to Islam by the Muslim states whether or not it used this label. The EWL, which is primarily made up of relatively moderate and pragmatic national women’s organizations in Europe, is the group most likely to shy away from using the “f-word.”

However, the labels can themselves carry different meanings in context. Using the differences in collocations associated with each of these three pivot concepts by region, it may be possible to see how the meaning of these terms vary organizationally as well as across these broad regions of the world.

This analysis selects the “top ten” words associated with each pivot word in the US and Europe as two potentially distinctive global regions of the “West.” Although it

would be useful to also see distributions by region within the Third World too, the size of this sample does not yet allow this, so all ten of the sites chosen from the global South are combined for sake of comparison. As Figure 3 indicates, the context of meaning does vary quite a bit depending on where in the world the organization is based.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

In both the Third-World sites and on US-based websites “rights” is the word most strongly associated with “woman” by a substantial amount (over 10,000 co-occurrences compared to just over 7,000 for the next most frequent collocation, “development”) and the list of frequencies also suggests that such rights are defined as human rights as well as women’s rights. In the European sites, by contrast, “rights” are less central (only in fourth place) and both “social” and “policy” are comparably prominent. In the US and non-Western sites “rights” also is frequently associated with both gender and feminist, but this is not the case in Europe-based sites. The ten European sites as a group distinctively give a more conservative tinge to the word “woman” by associating it frequently with both “man” and “child.” However, “woman” also carries an association with “action” in both Europe and in the global South, but not in the US, where “feminist” carries much of the association with movement, organization, activists and activism.

The liberal language of rights is certainly used in Europe too, but less than in other parts of the world. The word “social” appears to express a certain sort of critical stance to gender relations as well. While this word is associated with “feminist” in the US and global South sites, it is associated with “gender” in Europe and the global South, and with “woman” only in Europe. The ideas of social relations, social justice and social change as well as pragmatic approaches to social policy would trigger this sort of

frequent use, and it is intriguing that this word appears less frequently in the US than in other parts of the world.

“Development” as a term is closely associated not only with women but also with feminists and gender on the US-based sites. A similar pattern is also seen in the websites based in the global South, where women are prominently tied to both “rights” and “development.” Again, it is the European sites that are different, with both a regional location (Europe/an) and a relational term (man) being more frequently associated with women than either “rights” or “development” are. It is also striking that in the US the term “development” figures so centrally in the framing associated with all three terms (woman, feminist/m, gender), suggesting that a focus on development as well as international, human and rights (which also are among the top collocations for all three pivot words) consistently informs the identity of transnational women’s groups based in the US.

The identity of the European groups as a whole seems to make “woman” and “gender” carry most of the meaning of social change that is expressed with “feminist” language elsewhere, but the use of “women” in Europe also seems more connected to men and children and to policy, and thus conveys a more conventional idea of what such change should look like. The regional emphasis that was seen in the limited outreach to other parts of the world by the European sites is also echoed in the fact that the word “Europe(an)” is so frequent on these sites, while similar regional names do not emerge with comparable frequency in other parts of the world. Because “Europe” is a work in progress and the EU is engaged an identity building process of its own, this inward focus is not so surprising.

4.3 Organizational differences in identities

Turning to specific transnational women's organizations to see how their particular identities are expressed in the choice of language associated with the pivot words as well as the frequency of use of these three concepts, we can see that feminism is not one uniform identity. Not only is this label almost ten times as likely to be used in a sentence on the DAWN site than in one on the EWL web pages, but the kinds of ideas strongly associated with the concept of feminism also vary in meaningful ways.

The "liberal" language of rights is most strongly associated with feminism in the US, on the CWGL site, and while still fairly frequently associated on DAWN's site as well, rights is not an idea associated with feminism as such in the EWL webpages. By contrast, the social/economic dimensions of inequality are still most associated with feminism in the global South (both DAWN and ISIS) while the aspect of violence comes more to the fore for the EWL and CWGL in the North. WLUMML does not put the most stress on either of these ideas but rather expands on the issue of rights with strong associations of feminism with discussions of fundamentalism, religion, and Islam, clearly as a matter of struggle. The liberal feminism of WLUMML is a combative one, with universalism and human rights talk being embraced as a way of dealing with these challenges.

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

The organizations also have relatively distinctive profiles of meaning given to the pivot word woman/women. For ISIS and CWGL women are seen in terms of international connections, with both rights and development as key ideas tied into their internationally defined mission. Being international is more incidental to WLUMML and

DAWN, and is not in itself all that important to the EWL -- rather than part of its mission and identity, being international is more a mundane fact of life for the organization, not a key idea it associates with women. Development is also not a priority issue for either WLUMML or the EWL when speaking about women/woman. Both “man/men” and “violence” are leading ideas associated with women in the EWL, reflecting its pioneering stance in getting the EU to respond to problems of violence against women, rather than leaving them to the member states own policies alone. Sex/sexuality and violence both have a moderately significant association with women for CWGL and ISIS, which may also have to do with their strong ties to local grassroots initiatives in this area.

Finally, the issue of gender seems to have much more to do with policy than with theory (which does not figure in these top twenty lists) or activism and activists, except for the CWGL. In addition to general policy, gender is also associated with development policies and gender mainstreaming policies, giving it both a transnational and top-down connotation. But it is not especially more prominent in more mainstream groups like the EWL than in critical groups like DAWN, nor is it particularly a word associated with the North (as violence is) or with the South (as social/economic rights are). Rather than a theoretical term, gender seems to be a pragmatic one, used in relation to policies and practices of various kinds.

5.0 Conclusions

This examination of the web identities of transnational women’s organizations provides some support for general perceptions of how feminism is spreading but also challenges certain stereotypes of what these web networks and organizational identities are like. The notion that “feminist” is a radical term and relatively rarely used is certainly

confirmed by these data, but surprisingly the organizations based in the global South are less likely to avoid using this term than European-based websites. The EWL is a good example of this, since it includes the word feminist/feminism in only one-third of one percent of the sentences on its web site. However, it does give both the word “women” and the word “gender” a more activist connotation, using them in contexts (activist, strategy, movement, politics) where other transnational women’s groups use the word “feminist.” The meaning of feminist/m also varies, with the social/economic dimension sometimes outweighing a concern with human rights (as with DAWN and EWL) and sometimes the reverse (as with CWGL and ISIS).

It is the word “gender” that tends to have more use in the global North than South, and violence as an issue is also not as universal a concern as the more optimistic accounts of transnational women’s movement activism would suggest (e.g. Keck and Sikkink 1998). Also less optimistically, we can note that the density of the network formed by these organizations is not very great and the most prestigious groups still do tend to be in the global North. However, outreach is a different matter, and groups like ISIS in Manila are more actively linked globally than some well-resourced groups like the EWL which largely restricts its outreach to its own region and member organizations.

The policy focus of different groups is reflected also in how they speak of gender, a word that has more pragmatic political associations than is sometimes suggested. Use of “gender” on these websites is not as strongly associated with theory, universities and academe as it is with policies and programs. “Gender” associations range from the emphasis on men and violence and a largely governmental and institutionalized, familial and top-down policy usage in the EWL to the alternative economic globalization goals of

DAWN. The CWGL as well as ISIS occupy a middle-range position that mixes concern with violence and human rights with a largely liberal understanding of development, and WLUMML has a very distinctive profile of use for all three pivot terms, reflecting its particular mission.

Although this study is only exploratory and lacks a sufficient sample size to explore regional differences in detail, the regional orientation of the EWL comes through clearly and suggests that the distinction among transnational women's organizing on the regional level rather than globally is important. Expanding this study to consider differences among regions in the so-called Third World, as well as distinctions among groups with more socialist or liberal histories and orientations will be an important next step. However, even this preliminary look suggests that transnational women's organizations are adopting feminist ideas and goals even though they are typically not embracing a feminist label. The label may not be so important, however, if the words women and gender are able to carry an activist and challenging meaning. Looking more broadly at both the networking groups do and the language they use will be an important next step to understanding the new web of women's organizing transnationally.

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Appendix 1. Organizations in the Sample

| Name (Acronym) | URL | Country in which based and founding year | Total number of sentences on the website |
|--|-------------------------------|---|---|
| African Women's Media Centre (AWMC) | www.awmc.com | Senegal, 1997 | 8065 |
| Arab Women Solidarity Organization (AWSA) | www.awsanet.org | Egypt, 1982 | 2856 |
| Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD) | www.apwld.org | Thailand, 1986 | 10332 |
| Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) | www.arrow.org.my | Malaysia, 1993 | 23510 |
| Association for Women in Development (AWID) | www.awid.org | Canada, 1982 | 167848 |
| Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region (AWMR) | digilander.libero.it/awmr/int | Cyprus, 1992 | 2133 |
| Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) | www.cwgl.rutgers.edu | USA, 1989 | 16774 |
| Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) | www.dawn.org.fj | Fiji, 1984 | 36752 |
| Equality Now | www.equalitynow.org | USA, 1992 | 10106 |
| European Association for Women and Health Research (EAWHR) | www.eawhr.org | Netherlands, 1996 | 3101 |
| European Women's Lobby (EWL) | www.womenlobby.org | Belgium, 1990 | 85425 |
| Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) | www.fawe.org | Kenya, 1992 | 27580 |
| Global Fund for Women | www.globalfundforwomen.org | USA, 1987 | 15241 |
| Inter-American Commission of Women | www.oas.org/CIM | USA, 1928 | 28264 |
| International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPWINTL) | www.bpwintl.org | UK, 1930 | 3562 |
| International Federation of University Women (IFUW) | www.ifuw.org | Switzerland, 1919 | 27841 |
| International Women's Democracy Center (IWDC) | www.iwdc.org | USA, n/a | 4232 |
| International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) | www.iwtc.org | USA, 1978 | 11524 |
| Isis International - Manila (ISIS) | www.isiswomen.org | Philippines, 1974 | 121131 |
| MADRE | www.madre.org | USA, 1983 | 20820 |
| The Mother's Union | www.themothersunion.org | UK, 1876 | 18021 |
| Network of East-West Women (NEWW) | www.neww.org | USA, 1990 | 1191 |
| Older Women's Network-Europe (OWN) | www.own-europe.org | Italy, 1993 | 4374 |
| Research, Action, and Information Network for the Bodily Integrity of Women (RAINBO) | www.rainbo.org | USA, n/a | 2228 |
| Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) | www.wgnrr.org | Netherlands, 1978 | 18562 |
| Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) | www.wecf.org | Netherlands, 1992 | 8713 |
| Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) | www.wave-network.org | Austria, 1994 | 8713 |
| Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) | www.wedo.org | USA, 1990 | 63666 |
| Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) | www.wilpf.int.ch | Switzerland, 1915 | 23828 |
| Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) | www.wluml.org | France, 1985 | 27093 |

Figure 1

Hyperlinks among thirty transnational women's organizations; row totals indicate outreach and column totals indicate prestige for each individual organization's website

| <div>Link to:</div> <div>Link from:</div> | 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.iwtc.org | www.madre.org | www.newww.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 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| www.antenna.nl (wecf) | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| www.apwld.org | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 5 | |
| www.arrow.org.my | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | 9 | |
| www.awid.org | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | 7 | |
| www.awmc.com | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | |
| www.awsa.net | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| www.bpwintl.org | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | |
| www.cwgl.rutgers.edu | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 16 | |
| www.dawn.org.fj | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 5 | |
| www.eawhr.org | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| www.equalitynow.org | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | |
| www.fawe.org | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| www.globalfundforwomen.org | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | 7 | |
| www.ifuw.org | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 4 | |
| www.isiswomen.org | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 12 | |
| www.iwdc.org | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 5 | |
| www.iwtc.org | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | | 11 | |
| www.madre.org | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 5 | |
| www.newww.org | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 6 | |
| www.oas.org | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| www.own-europe.org | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 0 | |
| www.rainbo.org | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 4 | |
| www.themothersunion.org | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 0 | |
| www.wave-network.org | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 4 | |
| www.wedo.org | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 10 | |
| www.wgnrr.org | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 4 | |
| www.wilpf.int.ch | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| www.wluml.org | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 10 | |
| www.womenlobby.org | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 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 2

Frequency of pivot words “woman/women,” “feminist(s)/m” and “gender” by pooled sites and in five individual organizational websites

| | Woman/women | Feminist/m | Gender |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| US-based sites (10) | 26.9 | 1.3 | 7.7 |
| Europe-based sites (10) | 26.4 | 0.4 | 5.9 |
| Nonwestern sites (10) | 21.7 | 1.2 | 3.8 |
| CWGL | 50.9 | 1.0 | 6.1 |
| EWL | 39.4 | 0.3 | 11.6 |
| WLUML | 28.9 | 2.0 | 1.3 |
| ISIS | 28.6 | 1.2 | 4.8 |
| DAWN | 21.8 | 3.1 | 6.0 |

Note: Each cell contains percentage of the *total number of sentences* on the website in which the respective pivot word is used.

Figure 3

Top ten words collocated with key pivot words on websites (Woman/women, feminist/s, gender) by location of transnational women's organization central office.

| Location of Organization | | Collocated words for each of three key pivot words | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| | | <i>Woman/en</i> | | <i>Feminist(s)</i> | | <i>Gender</i> | |
| 10 non-Western websites | rights | 5211 | Woman/en | 1037 | Woman/en | 3,143 | |
| | international | 3842 | movement | 334 | equality | 1,285 | |
| | organization | 3206 | social | 247 | development | 1,207 | |
| | health | 3192 | development | 201 | policy | 948 | |
| | man | 3032 | rights | 195 | rights | 811 | |
| | development | 2647 | political | 191 | social | 657 | |
| | human | 2544 | international | 180 | international | 643 | |
| | information | 2281 | activist/m | 169 | education | 619 | |
| | action | 2252 | organization | 118 | health | 594 | |
| | violence | 2131 | society | 103 | human | 544 | |
| | | <i>Woman/en</i> | | <i>Feminist(s)</i> | | <i>Gender</i> | |
| 10 US-based websites | rights | 10349 | Woman/en | 1091 | Woman/en | 7,364 | |
| | development | 7267 | development | 562 | development | 4,967 | |
| | human | 5880 | organization | 476 | equality | 3,509 | |
| | international | 5013 | strategy | 356 | rights | 2,940 | |
| | violence | 4814 | movement | 351 | policy | 2,264 | |
| | organization | 4062 | international | 301 | human | 2,227 | |
| | man | 3872 | rights | 290 | international | 1,774 | |
| | information | 3494 | social | 240 | information | 1,667 | |
| | health | 3369 | activist/m | 194 | perspective | 1,444 | |
| | government | 3303 | political | 188 | violence | 1,313 | |
| | | <i>Woman/en</i> | | <i>Feminist(s)</i> | | <i>Gender</i> | |
| 10 European-based websites | man | 7017 | Woman/en | 164 | equality | 4,580 | |
| | Europe(an) | 7348 | violence | 43 | Woman/en | 4,008 | |
| | violence | 3778 | movement | 39 | policy | 1,783 | |
| | rights | 3419 | peace | 36 | Europe(an) | 1,631 | |
| | international | 2594 | international | 34 | man | 1,506 | |
| | policy | 2500 | rights | 30 | EU | 1,269 | |
| | action | 2330 | organization | 25 | mainstreaming | 1,243 | |
| | social | 2191 | health | 19 | social | 1,109 | |
| | member | 2173 | man | 19 | action | 857 | |
| | child | 2014 | national | 17 | development | 775 | |

Note: each number represents the number of sentences in which this word appears for this group of websites.

Figure 4

Comparison of Five Individual Websites by frequency of collocations to pivot words, arranged in order of percentage of sentences including the word “feminist.”

| Organization | DAWN | WLUML | ISIS | CWGL | EWL |
|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| “Feminist(s)/m” – overall frequency | 3.1 | 2.0 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 0.4 |
| <i>Rank order of this word’s collocation with the word “feminist(s)”</i> | | | | | |
| Rights | 10 | 6 | 8 | 2 | - |
| Social/Economic | 2/6 | 18/- | 9/12 | -/- | -/- |
| Violence | - | - | 16 | 4 | 2 |
| <i>Rank order of this word’s collocation with the word “woman”</i> | | | | | |
| Rights | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| International | 13 | 12 | 1 | 4 | - |
| Development | 4 | - | 8 | 6 | - |
| Man/men | 7 | 4 | 5 | 19 | 1 |
| Violence | 18 | 15 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Sex(ual) | 12 | 19 | 9 | 10 | 18 |
| <i>Rank order of this word’s collocation with the word “gender”</i> | | | | | |
| Rights | 8 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 18 |
| Policy(ies) | 5 | 9 | 7 | - | 3 |
| Activist/m | - | - | - | 5 | - |
| Development | - | 12 | | 7 | 12 |

Ranks above 20 are not tabulated and are represented with -