

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Throughout this analysis, I have addressed how reproductive-issue organizations vary in their discourse and advocacy about reproductive rights and the conditions that promote this variance. In my observations and interviews, I uncovered many different types of organizations, even within the single field of reproductive rights. Some organizations looked like those that neoinstitutionalists would expect to find; others emphasized the inclusiveness that feminists scholars of globalization view as key. Still others fulfilled the translator role that Merry (2005) and Riles (2006) have studied closely. I begin the process of categorizing these organizations and their unique characteristics in this dissertation.

Access

My first question was, "Who gets access to sites to define human rights and reproductive issues?". As I argued in Chapter 5, both the United Nations and the International Women's Day Celebrations at the University of Minnesota are stratified sites in terms of access and who are seen as agents of change. Beginning with the UN, NGO representatives who are able to participate in the here and now process of a UN meeting have a unique privilege. Their access is based on structural factors, including language, funding, access to technology, nationality, and being able to prove organizational legitimacy. For these reasons, the NGOs and their representatives from developing nations that attend the UN meetings, such as CSW, tend to be elites. Furthermore, American women and politics often overshadowed other participants and issues at the CSW meetings. Thus, access to these sites is not equal nor do the sites allow everyone to have an equal voice. The International Women's Day Celebration at the University of Minnesota has similar issues in terms of who attends the meetings and who gets to talk about issues and experiences.

However, this does not mean the CSW, other UN meetings, or the Minnesota International Women's Day Celebrations only promote a certain view of human rights or

that these settings are not useful. At the least, these sites allow diverse women to talk to each other in enacting international feminisms (Rupp 1998). Related, Desai (2007) argues for the politics of possibility in which international feminism understands both the limitations of its ability to transcend boundaries and work on issues, but also can look forward to future possibilities. The NGO side events at the UN meetings are places where this can happen. Even though these sites promote an opportunity to discuss diverse women's issues, this does not mean we should not be cognizant of who is not there and the reasons why they are not there (hooks 1984; Mohanty 1992; Grewal and Kaplan 1994).

Theories of Globalization

Turning next to my analysis of reproductive issue organizations themselves, I utilized two works of globalization, neo-institutionalism and feminist theories of globalization, to help understand organizations' constructions of reproductive rights in relation to inclusivity. Although neo-institutionalism and feminism emphasize different aspects of international organizations, the two theories are not in direct competition. Neo-institutionalism tends to focus more on a top-down approach, assessing reasons, such as legitimacy and funding, why nation states and other international actors endorse international norms that may not mesh with local culture. However, neoinstitutionalists would also suggest that individual agency and efficacy are among the principles that are promoted by these key actors. For neoinstitutionalists, the rise of feminism is evidence that an emphasis on individualism (in the form of resistance and grassroots mobilization) is being "universalized."

Feminist theories of globalization on the other hand tend to be more concerned with the interactive process of cultural change and international norms. Although feminist theories of globalization agree with neo-institutionalism on the idea that top-down mandates of cultural change are important, they place more significance on local initiative. Furthermore, while feminists emphasize the importance of inclusiveness and broad representation in international organizations, they do not expect to see these traits in every organization. On the contrary, they are critical of many international organizations precisely because they do not have these characteristics. Thus, feminism

recognizes the presence of hierarchical, exclusionary organizations at the same time that neoinstitutionalists recognize the presence of participatory, inclusionary organizations. The difference is one of emphasis: neoinstitutionalists see change happening through the former, while feminists expect change to happen through the latter.

I try to engage the theories in tandem with each other. They both contribute to my work in explaining differences and similarities in organizations, while at the same time, my work contributes to both theories. Using these theories, I studied the relationship, within organizations, of the interpretations of universal conceptions of reproductive rights and inclusivity. Related is my question on how organizations working on reproductive issues conceptualize and incorporate the local and/or diverse issues.

Adding to Neo-Institutionalism: Multiple Sources of Legitimacy

Beginning with the questions of how organizations bring in the local and/or diverse issues and how this affects who is seen as having expertise to define the issues, in Chapter 6, I demonstrated that there are multiple sources of legitimacy. International reproductive issue organizations appear to draw legitimacy not from a single source, but from a variety of sources. Sometimes, the sources of legitimacy are mutually exclusive. For example, the GI needed to look legitimate to international funders, such as the World Bank, but gaining the respect of World Bank representatives reduced its legitimacy in the eyes of audience members at a CSW meeting. On the other hand, WYA's legitimacy came primarily from its inclusion of many perspectives and individuals.

When neoinstitutionalists talk of legitimacy, they tend to treat it as one-dimensional. For example, they typically operationalize the concept by counting state links to international organizations without specifying the content of those links. What my analysis shows is that legitimacy in the international system is more complex. It can be drawn from a variety of sources. One should look not only at the number of links, but also the nature of the organizations to which a state or other organization is linked. Furthermore, legitimacy is also derived from sources outside of NGOs and IGOs, such as connections to local individuals.

Organizations' sources of legitimacy affect their framing of reproductive issues and who is seen as having expertise on these issues. For example, the Guttmacher

Institute is a research organization concerned with providing credible evidence and putting this research into action by interpreting what it means for those on the top. They therefore portray themselves as being the experts on reproductive issues by being able to define what things mean. In this case, local concerns are talked about in a scientific, rational, demographic framework that resonates with the international community. This framework is seen by core actors in the international system as a legitimate way to address “local” concerns. However, it is unclear if local concerns really stem from the local or instead are derived from the organization’s framework for deciding what issues are important to address based on their funding and expertise.

On other end of this spectrum are organizations, like the WYA, that derive their legitimacy from the people they serve (locals) or from women in general, in addition to the international system and other mainstream actors. These organizations work within legal, political and health frameworks. For example, the WYA is concerned about representing the voices of youth and their “true” basic needs.¹ Because of their individual-centered human rights philosophy, they have a difficult time talking past the individual. However, this does not mean that they are always inclusive. Surprisingly, in comparison with their presentation at CSW, they portray a more anti-abortion vision on their website and utilize the discourse of victim blaming to discuss HIV/AIDs.

The sources of legitimacy the organizations emphasize affect how they construct reproductive rights. Organizations more concerned with the international system, or in other words “the top”, tend to construct reproductive rights in a top-down fashion in which “local and diverse” issues tend to be framed in a universalistic way based on Western standards that resonate with the international system. Organizations that have multiple sources of legitimacy, which in my work points to both the local/diverse and the international system (or mainstream norms of reproductive rights for more “local”

¹ In theory, expanding individual rights makes sense and is an accepted norm by most people. However, in practice in terms of advocacy, my work through the analysis of the World Youth Alliance, shows that this problematic. With a narrow focus on the individual, cultural practices are not seen as wrong and thus we avoid the Western-centric debate about human rights, but instead move to a point where we cannot speak about cultural experiences or groups and that solutions to problems rest on the individual alleviating structural elements.

organizations, such as PCR), tend to have a more inclusive framing and construction of reproductive rights because they must be sympathetic to different actors at both ends of the spectrum.

Sources of legitimacy are closely linked to funding concerns. Barrett and Tsui (1999) showed that countries who adopted population policies in alignment with international norms received more funding from actors within the international system. However, I argue that we must look at what resources the organizations seek. For example, the Center for Reproductive Rights does look to the international system for legitimacy in terms of international reproductive rights' law, but they do not necessarily look to this system for the benefit of funding. They want reproductive rights, and particularly those of diverse women, to be seen as legitimate in these laws and the mainstream human rights movement. However, they align themselves with those with similar views and will not take funding with limitations that do not align with their mission or goals.

Other examples to discuss multiple sources of legitimacy and how this affects framing of issues are Minnesota International Health Volunteers, Pro-Choice Resources, and Family Care International. Like, the CRR, these organizations derive legitimacy from multiple sources and thus navigate local and/or diverse concerns with international or mainstream ones. Thus, most neo-institutionalist studies infer that actors (i.e. organizations or nation states) would pick one source and the one that would give the most legitimacy in relation to resources. This most likely would be the international system (or mainstream view), as works on decoupling show. However, my work shows that the organizations do not pick one source in order to increase their legitimacy to receive benefits, but instead utilize multiple sources to solve issues.

Contributions to Feminist Theory: Explanations for Inclusivity

The analysis here shows that organizations that are located in the West can be inclusive of diverse views both domestically and internationally. However, this does not mean that all organizations were inclusive and the ones that were either had to acknowledge privileges or worked to make sure diverse practices were seen as legitimate by others. Moreover, in relation to the international feminism literature on the difficulties

of organizing across diverse lines, my work shows similar things to that of Rupp (1998) and Desai (2007). That is that the spaces in which these organizations engage in advocacy work are not equal, but at the same time, these spaces do allow diverse women, at the minimum, to hear about each other's issues. In addition, some of the organizations specifically stated it was near impossible to include all women's concerns, but they did exemplify how we can work towards this goal without framing issues in a Western, normative way. Thus, my work shows *how* these organizations were able to enact this through how they did their work.

My work also relates to the gender and organization literature. While this work traditionally shows how organizations construct "gender" in the workplace, my work illustrates how gender can be constructed by organizations in terms of their discourse on reproductive rights which is effected by not only how they do their work, but their structure, and sources of legitimacy. For example, Gherardi (1995) and Kanter (1983) both argued that organizations that are larger, more bureaucratic and have less division of power tend to construct rigid gender ideologies. My work shows that organizations with these similar characteristics are less inclusive of diverse and local women in their construction of reproductive rights because of their singular source of legitimacy in the international system and concerns over being seen as credible. Furthermore, another point to touch on here is that there seems to be an assumption that organizations who do work on reproductive issues are "gender" or "feminist" organizations (Paxton et al 2006). But as shown in my work, not all organizations who do work on reproductive issues see themselves as "gender" or "feminist" organizations. The GI is an illustrative example in that they do not want to be seen as gender driven, as this would diminish their credibility as an objective research organization. Furthermore, this also helps to explain that the more inclusive organizations did highlight gender in some way as an important part of their work.

If we look at the discourse and ideas each organization talked about in defining reproductive rights, they were all concerned with health, rights and empowerment at the least. However, it is how they do their work to enact these international ideas about

human and reproductive rights that allows us to see if they are inclusive of diverse views and practices.

At the most inclusive end of the spectrum are the Center for Reproductive Rights and Pro-Choice Resources. The CRR uses law as a tool to make reproductive rights real for people and focuses on regions around the world in doing their work. They not only proactively try to make human rights instruments inclusive of reproductive rights; they also do direct advocacy work and are concerned with reproductive violations. The question is, why. A large part of this is that although these organizations are concerned with framing reproductive issues from the ground, this does not mean that they exclude international or mainstream norms about reproductive rights. Consistent with the ideas of feminist theories of globalization, they are able to simultaneously incorporate both levels. What is it about these organizations that allow them to do this?

For the Center for Reproductive Rights, the answer lies in using the law to secure reproductive rights. CRR documents cases and does advocacy based on what is happening on the ground. Furthermore, the organization also rejects funding that would make it frame issues in a certain way. The organization is concerned about women's rights and is an independent entity. Thus, even though this organization is similar to the GI (one of the least inclusive of diverse views in their interpretation), it is different in that its definitions are based on local and diverse concerns. Lastly, I believe part of the reason, beyond using the law, is that CRR focuses on regions instead of a broad based idea of "international" that allows its representatives to know and act upon the issues in conjunction with their partners in these regions.

Pro-Choice Resources is inclusive, both in theory and in practice. For example, they have a speaker series about diverse women's reproductive issues and staff training on diverse reproductive realities. They also aspire to have a full range of options for women with unplanned pregnancies in addition to abortion. But, as Lea noted, the organization has had growing pains in determining how pro-choice fits into a broader vision of reproductive rights. From a White, mainstream feminist perspective, pro-choice has been idealized as the right to abortion. However, PCR has tried, at least under Lea's directive, to be more inclusive of diverse perspectives and tries to use the term

reproductive justice that allows abortion to be seen only as one small part of reproductive concerns. And as Lea noted, one reason they are able to do this, despite debates with people in or associated with the organization, is because they are an independent organization that can make their own decisions. The organization is also a political organization, which I believe is both detrimental and in favor of them being inclusive of diverse concerns. It is detrimental because the name “pro-choice” has a certain connotation centered on abortion meshed in the mainstream feminist movement that does not always resonate with minority women. However, since they are a more political or activist organization, they are also able to say and do what they believe in, which may help them garner support. Nevertheless, I do wonder if Lea, who is cognizant of ideas such as privilege, was not the executive director if the organization would be having these discussions about reproductive justice and being inclusive.

While these organizations adopted an inclusive guiding framework, other organizations were pragmatically inclusive. A narrow focus—either topical or geographical—seemed to facilitate this pragmatic inclusivity. In my sample, all the organizations that were inclusive is in their construction and interpretation of reproductive rights either focused only on one group/region, a few groups/regions or did large scale work by focusing on regions across the globe. This makes these organizations more inclusive for a few reasons. First, is that these regions or groups were picked based on a logical/theoretical focus beyond funding. For example, MIHV works with the Somali community in Minnesota not only because of their prior work and current work in Africa, but because their director had done work with this community before. Another example is that the CRR works in regions where they have partners. Second, is that by having specific groups, places or regions, the organizations, as argued above, have multiple sources of legitimacy including in these places and within the groups they work with. Thus, they must utilize these concerns in their interpretation of universal norms and I believe have an easier time doing so because they have concrete information that is theoretically based to their missions to help with their interpretations. This means that organizations that do not have a specific rationale beyond funding and/or concerns stemming from the international system have a more hodge-podge way of selecting the

places and people they focus on which makes it more difficult for them to not interpret universal norms in a Western or top-down fashion.

Even the most inclusive organizations must often maneuver between universalistic interpretations based on normative, accepted standards and inclusiveness of diverse and/or local views. This is because these organizations have multiple sources of legitimacy. Thus, for example, these organizations must strike a balance between including or legitimizing the concerns of locals and diverse people within a larger framework of people or institutions they work with that espouse more normative constructions of reproductive rights (i.e. universal standards based on Western interpretations or a White mainstream feminist view of reproductive rights). Furthermore, there are also two other important things to say about this balance. One is that even the most inclusive organizations in my sample, such as the Center for Reproductive Rights and Pro-Choice Resources, believed it was near impossible to represent the concerns of every woman in the world. Thus, to be entirely inclusive may be, in Desai's (2007) words, a future possibility, but at this point not a reality. Second, is that visions of human rights state the individual is endowed with rights. So in the most inclusive fashion, human rights law should be able to apply to all individuals, even though scholars have most often looked at human rights as it applies to cultural experiences and/or groups of people based on a certain characteristic. Interestingly, one organization in my sample, the World Youth Alliance, envisions the world based on a stance of individualism in which individual experience is used to talk about what human rights means. However, as I have shown, this stance is problematic because this means not only that the organization has problems speaking about reproductive rights, but also that this post-modern stance means that the organization cannot talk past individual experience to speak about groups or cultural experiences, which makes naming and solving problems difficult.

It seems at first that my finding of the importance of multiple sources of legitimacy resonates with feminist theories of globalization in terms of the more interactive process of the local-global connection. In some ways, this is true in that I believe my more inclusive organizations are better explained by feminist theories of globalization because they do navigate both local and diverse concerns within

international norms. However, the process is a bit more nuanced than the current work in this area shows. Some organizations do care about changing international norms about human rights and reproductive rights by including diverse concerns or even just reproductive rights, such as the Center for Reproductive Rights and the World Youth Alliance. However, other organizations do not seem to want to change the entire framework of the international system, but instead want to work on their issues of concern and bring together different views of the issue. For example, MIHV, which works domestically in Minnesota with immigrants, addresses the limitations of this theoretical stance because this case points to the difficulties in working with international issues at the local level.

My dissertation shows that organizations' inclusivity and universality is not only dependent on their sources of legitimacy, but also on how organizations approach their work, which is also tied into the structure of the organizations. Thus, certain characteristics of organizations coincide with different sources of legitimacy and concern for inclusiveness. For example, in my sample, organizations that are less inclusive of diverse views in constructing and interpreting reproductive rights 1) accept the funding with the most limitations, 2) tend to be large and bureaucratic, and 3) are concerned with credible research targeted toward international elites. Alternatively, organizations that construct and interpret a more inclusive vision of reproductive rights 1) utilize health, law, politics and structural elements (i.e. providers) to approach their work; 2) tend to be more discretionary in the funding they accept; and 3) often have a relatively narrow focus.

Not all organizations fall exactly into these categories. For example, the CRR is a larger organization, but they have multiple sources of legitimacy and utilize the law to secure reproductive rights. This means they have to document cases on the ground and include this information in their constructions of reproductive rights in interpreting international norms. Another example of an organization that does not fit neatly into this typology is Minnesota International Health Volunteers/ MIHV does accept funding with limitations (i.e. state government funding), but has the goal of improving the health of the Somali community in Minnesota. MIHV must work with both health care providers and

the Somali community, which requires them to have multiple sources of legitimacy. This leads them to be somewhat inclusive of diverse views in their construction of reproductive rights.

Limitations and Future Work

Although my work makes important contributions to many literatures, there are also limitations to it. The first is my small sample size. Although I only have seven organizations and rely heavily on ethnographic data from two main events to speak about these organizations, I cannot generalize my findings to all organizations working on reproductive issues. Yet, as I have shown, my work contributes to the gender and globalization literatures. Furthermore, my work only looked at organizations that were headquartered in the West doing international work (including organizations based in New York City and Minnesota). Lastly, even though I have multiple sources of rich data, I was not able to engage in complete organizational histories by doing any archival research that would supplement by current findings.

Thus, I argue future work in this area should do the following. First, more organizations that are not self-described “gender” or “feminist” organizations should be studied to see if my findings about inclusiveness apply. Second, organizations doing international work headquartered in other countries should be examined because even though many NGOs are located in the United States, the United States is drastically different than most other Western nations. Thirdly, more organizations located in the United States, but in other states, could be studied. This is because Minnesota’s unique liberal roots may have impacted how reproductive rights is approached by the Minnesota organizations in my sample. Furthermore, in general more organizations should be included to see how generalizable my results are. Lastly, more in-depth organizational histories could be conducted to further understand how organizations’ sources of legitimacy and how they do their work affect their construction of reproductive rights.

Concluding Remarks

My research is important to both sociological scholarship and activist work where there is increased attention to globalization, particularly gender and human rights issues. Questions such as what is best for women inevitably come up in these discussions. Can

we talk about what is best for *all* women? This relates to how many feminists are currently at a point where activism has outpaced research on women's preferences for birth control (Snow 1994). The results of my study are not only important in advancing the globalization and gender literature, but also to both activists and scholars who engage in NGO and activist work to better understand how to build bridges among diverse groups to advocate solutions to gendered issues. Thus, it is important to conclude with the following ideas. First, not all organizations that work on reproductive issues are self-defined "gender" or "feminist" organizations. Second, organizations have multiple sources of legitimacy, which affects how they do their work and how inclusive they are of local and/or diverse views. Third, organizations must make trade-offs between universality and inclusivity in their work as no organization can be completely inclusive of all women. And lastly, even though some organizations are more inclusive than others, this does not mean that they do not add to the reproductive rights movement as we need organizations that both work pragmatically on immediate problems such as HIV/AIDs and organizations that also work to change how the world views human and reproductive rights by including more voices.

In a later project, it would be interesting to try to create a more complete categorization of the different types of international organizations. I do not claim that I observed the full range of organizational types. However, by identifying several key types of organizations, I have opened the door for a more complex analysis of the organizations that participate in the international system and the different roles that each carries out.