GLOBAL GENDER POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE UN: A SOCIOLOGICAL

EXPLORATION OF THE POLITICS, PROCESSES, AND LANGUAGE

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GLOBAL GENDER POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE UN: A SOCIOLOGICAL

EXPLORATION OF THE POLITICS, PROCESSES, AND LANGUAGE

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations (UN) provided a stage for the evolution of a global women's

movement and global gender equality policy in the 20th century. My dissertation adds a

unique perspective to the sociological literature on the global gender equality regime in

that it focuses on the social construction of gender equality policy in the Commission on

the Status of Women (CSW) of the UN. The guiding research question for my project is

″How is gender equality policy socially constructed in UN's CSW?″ My goal is to

unpack some of the processes and politics of knowledge and norm-production in the

CSW in order to explore ways in which women and men around the world may be better

able to shape and influence global gender equality policy and utilize it in their national

contexts.

Data collection involved 700 hours of ethnographic participant observation in and

around the offices of the UN headquarters in New York City/NY. Much of these data

were collected during a two month internship in Fall 2010 in the Division for the

Advancement of Women (now UN Women). After the internship I accessed the field site

through an annual UN ground-pass in my capacity as UN delegate and member of the

International Committee of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS). In this capacity I

also observed and documented the CSW 53 meeting in 2009, the CSW 55 meeting in

2011, and the CSW 56 meeting in 2012. In addition I recorded, transcribed and analyzed

20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with UN staff members involved in the organizational logistics of the CSW, diplomats, country delegates, and global gender activists working in and around the CSW.

My dissertation is structured in three core chapters that have been prepared as stand-alone publications. The first, "Invisible Lives, Silenced Violence: Transphobic Gender Violence in Global Perspective" deals with the invisibility of queer bodies and the silencing of gender identity issues in the CSW. The chapter dissects the construction of macro social policy and links it to public health outcomes in UN member states, exemplified through evidence of transphobic hate crime in the US. In the chapter ″The Insider Outside: Accessibility and Access to the United Nations through the Lens of Feminist Standpoint Theory,″ I address insider/outsider issues in ethnography and access of civil society to the UN. Guided by feminist standpoint theory I explore fluid, shifting insiderness and outsiderness among women activists as well as myself as Non-American, former UN intern, white, educated scholar-activist. The third chapter ″'The Perfect Blend'-Sociologists for Women in Society's Global Public″ focuses on the relationship of scholarship and activism within SWS, and the benefits and challenges of SWS' engagement with UN politics and policy development since the mid-1990s.

My hope is that my research can inform policymakers, researchers, students, peers, social movement organizations, and others that want to become agents of global social change with the goal to advance democracy and equal life chances regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, sexuality, race, class, religion, citizenship, ability or age.

DEDICATION

Mams, Ama & Tante Marianza,

the women who raised me,

and taught me to value education, and myself.

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Having finished a dissertation I am looking back on all the support and love I could not have done without. First and foremost I thank my mother Sieglinde and my brother of choice, Robert (″Berti″), who believe in me no matter what, and who selflessly let me go, even though that meant geographical separation. The knowledge of your presence lifts my heart and spirit every day.

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Sol and Peter – no word can describe the admiration I have for your art, knowledge production, and amazing souls. I am honored by your friendship, I thank you for helping me heal, and I hope to have many supernachmittags with you. Dancing queer, or not. Pregnant man, or not.

Last but not least: Steve, I love you, and I thank you and your/my(!) amazing family for the loving support, the many laughs, the understanding, and the hugs. Thank you for helping me to keep it simple, and to live a happy, joyous, free life, one day at a time. I am elated that I soon will be the mother of our child Amani Maria Evelyn Jauk-Ajamie who held me up through the last part of this dissertation journey and is the wondrous prize waiting on the other side.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While some individuals, institutions, and even governments deny the unequal

treatment and participation of women, others argue that gender inequality continues despite

the efforts of several waves of women's movements, as well as national and international

policy measures. Gender inequality is one of the biggest obstacles to democratic politics on

the regional and global level (Lorber 2010, Moghadam 2009, Fuchs Epstein 2007). Women

worldwide have organized across borders to fight male supremacy and against gender

inequality that limits their participation in political, social, cultural and economic institutions.

National and international women's movements have advanced their interests that arise from

their particular life experiences for hundreds of years (Hawkesworth 2012, Meyer and Prügl

1999, Rupp 1997). The rise of multilateral institutions in the twentieth century has supported

forms of transnational feminisms which are shaping the normative praxes of global

governance (Patil 2011, Gaer 2009, Desai 2007b, Moghadam 2005). The United Nations

(UN) has played a major role in providing actual and virtual space for these transnational

feminisms (Bunch 2007 , Ferree 2006, Snyder 2006, United Nations 2000, Reanda 1999,

Pietilä and Vickers 1994).

As Freeman (1996) noted, in the 20 years between the First World Conference on Women held in 1975 in Mexico City and the Fourth held in Bejing in 1996, ″the women's movement has swept the globe″ (p.1). As I will show through my own data this framing of ″one″ women's movement has been complicated in recent decades. My research focuses on transnational organizing for women's rights and seeks to unpack global gender equality policy and its negotiation in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The CSW is the UN's primary intergovernmental body to negotiate global gender equality policies, and its members meet annually in New York City to discuss what is called a priority theme. This is a topic or thematic field pertaining to gender (in)equality that is defined annually by the bureau of the CSW. It is critical that we understand how gender equality policy is socially constructed in the UN's CSW in order to open up more spaces for activism and scholar-activism to shape its policy-outcomes. For this reason, my goal is to unpack some of the processes and politics of knowledge and norm-production within the CSW. I used institutional ethnography (Smith 2005, Eastwood 2005, Smith 1990) to explore the ways in which women around the world shape and influence global gender equality policy in this specific organization, as well as more broadly in their home countries and national institutions.

My data consists of 700 hours of ethnographic participant observation and informal field conversations documented by extensive fieldnotes, documents, images, recorded events and memos from the rooms of the UN headquarters in New York City/NY. Much of these data were collected during a two month internship in the Fall of 2010 in the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). After my internship I accessed the field site through an annual UN ground-pass in my capacity as UN delegate and member of the International

Committee of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS). In this capacity I also observed and documented the CSW 53 meeting in 2009, the CSW 55 meeting in 2011, and the CSW 56 meeting in 2012. In addition I tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed 20 semi-structured interviews with UN staff members involved in the organizational logistics of the CSW, diplomats, country delegates, and global gender activists working in and around the CSW with an average length of one hour. I utilized Atlas.ti to organize my data, and employed constructive grounded theory as analytic strategy (Charmaz 2009, 2006).

More broadly, I seek to shed light on the relationship between democratic ideals and political practices of global governance actors by unpacking the processes of negotiation that are hidden, some of which are democratic while others represent more hegemonic power constellations in consensual outcome documents of the CSW. My dissertation is divided into three distinct areas of inquiry into the social construction of gender equality policy in the CSW. All three examine aspects of interaction between the UN system, sovereign countries and global feminist civil society in establishing global social norms for the advancement of women and girls. Yet, each is unique in its theoretical, substantive, and methodological contributions and thus engages slightly different literatures. Before introducing these areas, I set the stage by briefly outlining how the UN has come to embrace gender equality during the course of the latter 20th century. I then demonstrate why the UN, and in particular the CSW, matters, and briefly flesh out the functions, potentialities, and limitations of the CSW for global gender equality. This study contributes to the literature on global governance through a unique data set that also includes diplomats and UN staff and makes new connections between micro processes of diplomatic practices and social movements to macro outcomes of global governance in regard to gender (in)equality.

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The UN is an international organization founded by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security and promoting social progress and human rights after the wreckage of World War II (United Nations 1945). As an intergovernmental organization, its members are states. Thus, it serves as an institutional funnel through which member states channel their foreign policies (Weiss 2010, Fasulo 2009). Thanks to a handful of women delegates from Asia and North and South America working together with 42 Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), ″equal rights for men and women″ are engrained in the preamble of the foundational charter of United Nations, which was signed on 26 June 1945, in San Francisco, and came into force on 24 October 1945 (United Nations A/61/583-2006, United Nations 1945).

Women delegates and NGO-representatives urged for a separate body specifically dedicated to women's issues (Bunch 2007 , United Nations 2006, United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996). The Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) was established shortly thereafter on June 21 1946. This functional commission and intergovernmental body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is dedicated exclusively to advancement of women. Its members – represented through appointed delegates working in country mission offices on site, as well as political officials and ministers that are sent to specific negotiations - convene annually in at the UN Headquarters in New York to formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality. The commission has 45 elected members, et all 193 member states can negotiate and vote in its annual meetings. During the two weeks of negotiations there are also parallel events held by representatives of the UN-system, invited

academic experts, and grassroots organizations who make use of the convention to lobby representatives of member states. The outcome of the annual meetings is a set of policies developed through consensus of all member, enshrined in a document called "Agreed Conclusions." They are then considered binding policy guidelines for all member states, yet lack mechanisms of policing and enforcement (CSW 2013).

In writing their history the UN has periodized it's efforts for gender equality into five different phases (United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996, United Nations A/61/583-2006): (1) 1945-62 legal foundations, (2) 1963-75 women in development, (3) 1976-85 the decade for women, (4) 1986-96 equality, development, and peace, and (5) 1996-2006 women post-conflict. Each phase represents important milestones in shaping policy recommendations and obligations for its member states (see Figure 1)[1]. In the first stage, the UN worked to establish legal equality for women through creating instruments of human rights and motivating member states to collect data on women's status. It also created laws and programs to aid the advancement of women. Only in the second period, from 1963 to 1975, did governments begin to actually create laws and programs, sparked by the General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (DEDAW) in 1967. The international community recognized that laws are not enough to improve the social and economic realities of women in developing countries and that the UN needed to change its development programs to meet the challenge. Women's advancement gained momentum with the proclamation of 1975 as International Women's Year and the first major conference on women in the same year in Mexico City.

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[1] Jain (2005) suggests slightly different stages: 1945-1965: Setting the stage for equality, 1966-1975: Inscribing development into rights, 1976-1985: Questioning development paradigms, 1986-1995: Development as if women mattered, 1996-2005: Lessons from UN's sixth decade.

1945	UN charter
1945- 1962	*Establishing legal foundations*
1946	CSW Commission on the Status of Women established
1948	UN declaration of human rights
1963-75	*Recognizing women in development*
1967	Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (DEDAW)
1975	International women's year
1975	First World Conference on Women, Mexico City
1976-85	*The UN Decade For Women*
1979	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women adopted (CEDAW)
1980	2nd world conference, Copenhagen
1985	3rd world conference, Nairobi
1986-96	*Equality, development, and peace*
1987	CSW begins to meet annually
1993	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
1994	First Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women
1995	4th world conference, Beijing China
1996-2006	*Women post-conflict*
2000	23rd special General Assembly on women, equality, development and peace
2000	Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
2010	Creation of UN Women

Figure 1. UN Timetable

(organized by author, based on United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996)

The third phase, from 1976 to 1985, coincided with the UN Decade for Women, which solidified the view point that women are essential contributors to the development process. This awareness was born out of better statistics about gender inequality in member states and new equality indicators based indicators based on data collected by the UN. The availability of evidence raised global consciousness about women's issues, this consciousness was fostered in two more global women's conferences. One direct result of this crucial period was the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which constitutes an international bill of rights for women. Conventions are stronger than declarations because they are legally binding for governments that have signed them. When the UN General Assembly adopts a convention, it creates international norms and standards. Once a convention is adopted by the UN General Assembly, member states can then ratify the convention, promising to uphold it. Governments that violate the standards set forth in a convention can then be censured by the UN (Volger 2010).

The strengthening of the mandate of the CSW in 1986 marks the onset of the fourth phase (it had met biennially from 1970-1986 and began to meet annually in 1987). The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (25 June 1993) is vividly remembered by people involved as birthplace of the slogan ″women's rights are human rights,″ first coined by Charlotte Bunch (1990). The Declaration on The Elimination of Violence against Women in 1994 appointed the first Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. A Special Rapporteur is appointed by the Secretary General of the UN with the mandate to examine, monitor, and publicly report on specific human rights problems. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (4–15 September 1995) marked crucial breakthroughs, including the

adoption of The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA). This declaration defined international commitments to equality for women, promoted gender mainstreaming in all development areas[2], and outlined twelve critical areas of concern (United Nations 1995). Only delegates from the four major NGO's interacted with the official conference, but the Huairou NGO Forum alongside the UN Fourth World Conference on Women enabled 30,000 civil society delegates to participate with the help of new technology. The UN's efforts to establish instruments for gender equality were crucial for international women's organizing. The Women's World Conferences "cemented women's agency in the global era" (Desai 2002: 31) and provided space for transnational solidarities to be built among women, who adopted the UN as "unlikely godmother" for their growth and networking (Snyder 2006). Despite some very conservative member states and its bulky bureaucratic hierarchy, international women's movements were able to use and develop participation mechanisms. But this new era also brought challenges due to the reproduction of inequalities between women from the North and South (Desai 2009, Naples 2002).

The decade of 1996-2006 demarcates a focus on peace as women from post conflict and post cold war countries brought in their voices. This period is also seen as a period of consolidating the advancement of women within the UN and within national equality machineries in member states (United Nations 2000, United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996). To monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action more effectively, the CSW enhanced its own methods of work. In 1997, it agreed that the outcome of each meeting should be the adoption of negotiated conclusions. The "Agreed Conclusions" are a set of

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[2] In recent decades gender mainstreaming has been deconstructed as panacea against gender inequality, and feminists have pointed out its pitfalls, such as depolitization of gender issues, lack of implementation mechanisms, as well as bureaucratization of gender equality programs (Gaer 2009, Scambor and Scambor 2008, True 2003, Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002, True and Mintrom 2001).

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recommendations to all member states and other stakeholders on how to advance gender equality in regard to the annual priority theme. It also enhanced communication with the organizational environment. Since 1996 Expert Group Meetings on the yearly theme involving experts from academia and civil society have been organized prior to the Commission's sessions. This process formally allowed for the knowledge transfer that is a focal point of my project. In 2000, the United Nations' Millenium Declaration (A/55/L.2) promoted gender equality as one of eight goals to achieve by 2015. The Security Council acknowledged the role of women for the first time in history with a groundbreaking resolution on women and conflict (S/RES/*132)* in 2000. It also recognized sexual violence in conflict as a matter of international peace and security (S/RES/1820) for the first time in June 2008. Finally, the gender architecture within the UN underwent dramatic reorganization marking the beginning of a new period.

In 2010, the UN decided to merge four different offices into one large entity. UN Women merges and builds on the work of previously distinct parts of the UN system focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment: The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). This merger marries what were internally referred to as the ″operational″ and ″normative″ sides of UN gender equality work. In terms of division of labor, OSAGI and DAW have been regarded as doing normative, bureaucratic work. INSTRAW and UNIFEM have been interpreted as the ″operational″ wing. These entities work on concrete projects and trainings in the field and support member states in achieving national development goals.

On September 14, 2010 the former president of Chile Michelle Bachelet was appointed as head of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) as Undersecretary General (USG), which is to date the highest official rank for a gender-related office in the United Nations – an elevation that NGO's wanted for years (GEAR 2011). January 1, 2011 marked a most important turn in UN gender policy as UN Women became fully operational based on a resolution on system wide coherence (United Nations A/RES/64/289-2010). Launched on 24 February 2011, this entity signifies the onset of a new phase of worldwide gender equality policy. Michelle Bachelet, served as its head from 2011 to 2013.

Why UN, CSW, and UN Women are important

The UN is crucial to global gender equality because it firmly places gender equality on the global agenda and acknowledges the critical role of women in development processes. The UN also provides monetary resources through the women-centered projects of its agencies (e.g. UNICEF, UN Women). Through resolutions, conferences, and education the UN provides tools and guidelines for local women to influence their governments. CEDAW, for instance, has concrete instruments and complaint procedures for individual women and women's groups to address gaps in domestic governmental policies. NGOs can supplement or present alternative information in ″shadow reports″ accompanying official periodic government reports that State parties are required to submit under treaties.

Through participatory instruments women's voices can be heard, and countries can be held (morally, not legally) accountable for their commitment to gender equality. Another significance of women's rights instruments, UN gender policies, and global UN campaigns lies in their capacity to shape cultural understandings and raise awareness and resources in member states. A recent study suggests that global norms regarding violence against women are reaching citizens worldwide, including in some of the least privileged regions of the globe. During the first decade of the 2000s, women in 23 of 26 countries became more likely to reject intimate partner violence, as data collected in demographic and health surveys funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) revealed. The existence of global campaigns, higher educational attainment and access to media have been identified as main reasons for this positive change (Pierotti 2013). The UN creates and communicates global cultural meanings, yet is dependent on generating political pressure on states from UN committees (like the CSW), sympathetic leaders within a country, and international and national nongovernmental organizations (Merry 2011).

Furthermore, the collection of gender aggregated data within the UN is of great importance in mapping gender inequality and developing measures of change (Jain and Chacko 2008). The CSW provides education for member states, diplomats, and NGOs through annual reports and side events during the meetings. Despite the fact that the CSW produces recommendations rather than binding legal documents, it has important functions for the advancement of (knowledge about) gender equality in UN member states. It forces delegates to put resources towards gender matters. Countries prepare country statements and then send delegates to New York City to present them.

The benefit most often noted in the activist literature is that the CSW creates

networking opportunities for women, and space for NGOs to influence the language of the

Agreed Conclusions, the annual outcome document of the CSW. These are used by activists in

member states to pressure governments and to develop ″translocal discursive power″

(Eastwood 2006:188). In comparison with other commissions and meetings, the CSW has the

highest civil society participation (DESA NGO 2013a). Here, feminists have successfully

transgressed dichotomies and challenged knowledge construction. Women broke open the UN

format of formal meetings and brought their own method of parallel events, networking, and

caucuses to feed into the official conference (Jain and Chacko 2008). For women activists who

are silenced in their home countries, the CSW creates opportunities to network and be heard at

the meetings and in briefings (Bedford 2010, Zettler 2009). I now turn to a brief overview of

the three areas of inquiry that follow in the next three chapters of this dissertation.

Overview of chapters

My dissertation is structured in three core chapters that are prepared as stand-alone

publications. I thus present them as articles, each with a preceding abstract, yet for purposes

of formatting guidelines I combine my references at the end of the compiled dissertation. The

first of these, chapter II in this dissertation, has already been accepted for publication in

2013, in *Advances in Gender Research: Gendered perspectives on conflict and violence:*

macro and micro settings, edited by Marcia Segal and Vasilikie Demos, Emerald Publishing.

Under the title ″Invisible Lives, Silenced Violence: Transphobic Gender Violence in Global

Perspective″ this chapter deals with the invisibility of queer bodies and the silencing of gender identity issues in the CSW. The chapter dissects the construction of macro social policy and links it to public health outcomes in member states, focusing on evidence of transphobic hate crime in the US. I argue that the micro level of interpersonal transphobic violence is co-constituted by a conspiracy of silence on the macro level of UN policies.

In the next chapter, ″The Insider Outside: Accessibility and Access to the United Nations through the Lens of Feminist Standpoint Theory,″ I address insider/outsider issues in ethnography and access of civil society to the UN. Guided by feminist standpoint theory, in particular writing of Naples (1996), I explore fluid, shifting insiderness and outsiderness among women activists as well as my own position as a Non-American, former UN intern, white, educated scholar-activist. This work has been submitted to the journal *Qualitative Sociology*.

Chapter IV, tentatively titled, ″'The Perfect Blend'-Sociologists for Women in Society's global public sociology ″ will be presented at the pre-conference of the ASA section of Human Rights in August 2013, and after this peer review, submitted to *Gender & Society*. This article focuses on the relationship of scholarship and activism within SWS, and the benefits and challenges of SWS' engagement with UN politics and policy development since the mid 1990s. In the concluding chapter V I spell out the intellectual merit of this project, as well as limitations, and future research plans.

I argue that my work adds a unique perspective to the sociological literature on the global gender equality regime which has mainly focused on Non- Governmental Organizations and grassroots discourses so far (Ferree & Tripp, 2006; Jain, 2005; Moghadam, 2009). I decidedly look at the organizational level and the "ruling relations"

(Smith 2005, 2009) within the UN system which remain hidden to those (women) who are most affected by them. Second, taking global gender governance as example, my research seeks to integrate micro and macro level analysis (Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981).

The project addresses the interactive relationship of micro-sociological construction of macro-sociological conceptions and shows how large scale social phenomena (such as gender inequality) are shaped, but also shape, documentary reality, global gender democracy, and actual life chances of individuals worldwide. My work also reveals gaps between the democratic ideals of the UN and its member states in terms of access of civil society and consensual outcome documents, and hegemonic processes within the actual micro-sociological processes of negotiation.

My research substantiates critical transnational feminist critique that the ″global women's movement″ is not a monolithic block (Patil 2011, Desai 2007b) and we have to address power differential not only between institutions of global governance and women activists, but also between women (Naples and Desai 2002). My hope is that my research can inform policymakers, researchers, students, peers, social movement organizations, and others that want to become agents of global social change with the goal to advance democracy and equal life chances regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, sexuality, race, class, religion, citizenship, ability or age.

CHAPTER II

INVISIBLE LIVES, SILENCED VIOLENCE: TRANSPHOBIC GENDER VIOLENCE

IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

In this paper, I use the issue of violence against transgender individuals to explore the (limited) meanings of gender within the context of the Commission on the Status (CSW) of Women in the United Nations (UN). Using constructivist grounded theory and institutional ethnography I bring together field research from two ethnographic qualitative research projects I have been pursuing from 2009-2012 I studied the Commission on the Status of Women through their annual meetings in the New York Headquarters of the UN. I first demonstrate the severity of transphobic violence as a global public health problem. I proceed to report highlights of global LGBT activism, such as the Yogyakarta Principles and the latest developments within the Human Rights Council of the UN for the first time addressing global LGBT violence in 2011. I then examine the silencing of transgender experiences in the CSW by exploring the contested use of the term gender over the last two decades of intergovernmental negotiations.

This study highlights the need to broaden the conceptualization of violence and gender violence which has important theoretical and policy implications. Linking micro experiences of violent victimization in local trans-communities to the macro context of gender violence in global gender equality policy development is crucial to the advancement of human rights.

Introduction

This paper seeks to develop more expansive approaches to understand both the idea of violence and specifically gender violence. It does so by applying the sociological imagination (Mills 1959) to the social problem of transphobic violence and – drawing on ethnographic research from two different fieldsites – making a connection between experiences of violent victimization of transgender individuals on the micro level and the macro level of international policy discourse in the United Nations. These conceptual shifts have important theoretical and policy implications: First, data demonstrate that the familiar equation "gender violence=violence against women" is insufficient. I argue that we need to develop a broader and more accurate concept of gender based violence that includes transphobic violence. This is relevant for sociological research and for international gender policy which has the potential to guide politics of nations and entire global regions. Thus, I examine the exclusion of transgender experiences in the United Nations' (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) by exploring the contested use of the term "gender" over recent decades of intergovernmental negotiations. I suggest

that the silencing of transgender experiences and the policing of dichotomous gender boundaries in CSW outcome documents constitutes a form of what Valentine (2007) calls "representational violence." The omission of transphobic violence normalizes power asymmetry and enables more direct forms of gender violence and discrimination to take place. I argue that with a sharpened lens on gender violence as a broad and multifaceted phenomenon, feminist sociology as well as consensual global agreements in the context of the CSW could be better utilized as instruments to overcome cultural transphobia and thus ultimately transphobic violence in different religious and cultural contexts.

Since the 1990's the category transgender has bound together an abundant diversity of gender identity expressions forming a collective transgender rights movement (Stryker 2008, Davidson 2007) that is connected to the broader Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Movement (LGB), and more than an added T in LGBT (Stone 2009, Broad 2002). Transgender, or "trans*"[3] denotes an array of individuals whose gender identities do not match their sex assignment at birth. This includes persons who identify as the "opposite" birth-sex but also individuals who identify as gender-variant beyond the binary gender order who may permanently or temporarily change or bend their gender presentation, with or without surgical or chemical help. Yet transgender is not in itself an identity term, nor a label for a new minority with special needs, but a descriptive label for being differently gendered that illuminates the complexity of gender for everybody (Elliot 2009, Currah, Green and Stryker 2008).

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[3] Transgender advocates and scholars have recently moved to denote trans* with an asterisk to signify the fluidity and openness of the category. I refrain from using the asterisk in this paper for better readability.

In the international context "trans" cannot be embraced universally as an identity category as it does not necessarily cover different cultural gender constructs and their self-definition at different times and places, evidencing the mutability and fluidity of gender (Nanda 2000). Latin American activists may speak of "travesti" identities, indigenous activists of "hijras" or "metis," and some Asian cultures embrace a "third gender." Nevertheless gender and trans identity are political categories for groups of individuals who face massive discrimination based on their perceived gender expression, as well as micro and macro violence in all world regions (A/HRC/19/41 2011, Human Rights Watch 2009, Kidd and Witten 2007).

Estimating the prevalence of trans populations is difficult due to the breadth of gender constructions in different cultures and the stigmatization associated with gender variance in most regions, yet the overall transgender-identified population worldwide may exceed 20 million when all cultural definitions are included (Kidd and Witten 2007). While transgender advocacy organizations and human rights activists worldwide have made some strides and brought transgender discrimination to the forefront of the political debate in their countries and internationally, discrimination based on gender identity is still relatively absent in the international policy discourse in the context of the UN.

Hillary Clinton earned standing ovations when she delivered what has become a historical speech on Human Rights Day 2011 in Geneva, and called to "go further and work here and in every region of the world to galvanize more support for the human rights of the LGBT community" (Clinton 2011). Some delegates walked out during the Clinton speech. A coordinated walk-out of most Muslim and African countries was also staged on March 7, 2012, during the opening speech of Ban Ki-moon, the first ever

Secretary General to address LGBT violence as a Human Rights violation at the first Human Rights Council hearing on discrimination and violence against LGBT people in the history of the UN (Gennarini 2012). In other parts of the UN system, like the CSW, there is no need for delegates to walk out, as LGBT violence is not openly discussed and remains an elephant in its conference rooms (Zerubavel 2006).

The exclusion of transgender experiences in the CSW becomes evident when exploring the contested use of the term "gender" over recent decades of intergovernmental negotiations. In this paper I argue that some actors in the CSW act as "gender border patrol" (a term introduced to describe the nature of transphobic hate crime; Lynch 2005) and join an annual effort to substitute the word "gender" with "men and women" in outcome documents in order to avoid more fluid interpretations of the concept of gender. I suggest that this form of policing dichotomous gender boundaries contributes to symbolic violence against trans individuals by silencing their experience. In his ethnography of the category transgender, Valentine (2007) proposes that violence, similar to culture, has an omnibus character and incorporates not only physical abuse and murder but all practices that may be perceived as impacting negatively upon a life. He draws attention to representational violations that resonate with larger structural violence. Since 1996 the CSW produces a consensual outcome document that contains sets of recommendations to advance gender equality in its member states called the Agreed Conclusions. The complete absence of trans reality and trans violence in the Agreed Conclusions can be read as a form of violence along these lines that is linked to tolerance of discrimination, interpersonal violence and violation of transgender human rights on a state level.

Methods

Before I began my UN research, I conducted ethnographic field research in
transgender communities in three differently sized Midwestern cities. I engaged in
participatory observation of support groups at transgender related events amounting to
approximately 800 hours of fieldwork. In addition I conducted 15 recorded interviews
with transgender identified individuals (average length of interview = 90 minutes). My
research focus was broadened and shifted in 2009 when I attended my first meeting of the
Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in the UN Headquarters in New York City
as a teaching assistant with 10 students from an undergraduate class on women in global
society. Feminists have argued that a methodological focus on easily accessible
oppressed individuals creates a power differential between the more powerful sociologist
and the less powerful subject (Sprague 2005). In line with this, I became interested in the
nebulous negotiations of global gender equality policy and the (absence of)
representation of trans within the realm of the hard-to-reach population of diplomats.

I have since collected about 700 hours of ethnographic participant observation and
many informal field conversations documented by extensive fieldnotes, documents,
images, taped events and memos in the rooms of the UN headquarters in New York City.
Much of these data were collected during a two month internship in the Fall of 2010 in
the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).[4] In addition I also tape-recorded,
transcribed and analyzed 12 interviews with UN staff members involved in the
organizational logistics of the CSW, diplomats, and global gender activists working in

[4] As of January 2011 DAW has merged into the new UN gender architecture "UN Women" together with
three other gender entities in the UN system.

and around the CSW. I accessed the field site through an annual UN ground-pass in my capacity as UN delegate and member of the International Committee of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS). In this capacity I also observed and documented the CSW 53 meeting in 2009, CSW 55 meeting in 2011, and the CSW 56 meeting in 2012[5]. Fieldnotes and interviews from both projects have been transcribed into digital word processing files, and I utilized qualitative data software to organize and manage the projects.

I situated myself as a feminist sociologist, with the understanding that there is no single feminist methodology, and no one correct feminist method, but "multiple feminist lenses" (Hesse-Biber 2007:7). In this context I honored basic interrelated tenets of feminist methodology, as I seek to challenge gender neutral theories and ask new questions, to "study up" by examining elites and high level diplomatic discourse, to address issues of power and authority, and to acknowledge subjectivity and reflexivity in the practice of research (Sprague 2005). By doing so I hope the findings of this study will make a small contribution to positive social change for women and gender variant individuals locally and globally.

In both projects I have followed the constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach of Charmaz (2006, 2009) which suggests simultaneous data collection and analysis, pursuit of emergent themes through early data analysis, inductive construction of categories and the integration of categories into a theoretical framework. I apply the lenses and tools of institutional ethnography (Smith, 1990, 2005) as it emphasizes connections among the sites and situations of everyday life, professional practice, and

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[5] Both projects have been approved by the IRB of the University of Akron, see Appendix.

policy making. Such connections are accomplished primarily through what Smith has

labeled textually-mediated social organization. Institutional ethnography (IE) is grounded

firmly in fieldwork study of texts-in-use and aims to lay bare often invisible "ruling

relations" (in my case diplomatic agreements). Smith (2005) describes IE as a "method of

inquiry," but only to emphasize the character of "discovery" rather than the testing of

hypothesis and explication of theory as analysis of the empirical. It is the spirit of

discovery we find in both CGT and IE that led me to think together my two seemingly

different strands of research and allows me to connect micro experiences of violence with

macro level gender equality and human rights policy. The multiple data collection

strategies allow for triangulation of the data (Creswell 1998) and enhanced descriptive,

interpretive and theoretical validity (Johnson 1997).

Gender violence revisited

Different forms of gender violences

As reflected by the title of this paper,[6] I am focusing on the invisible lives of

transgender individuals. On the local as well as global level the staggering amount of

interpersonal, symbolic, legal, and structural violence suffered by trans individuals often

goes unreported and unnoticed. In this context we need to unpack the intertwined

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[6] The title of this paper is partly inspired by Namaste (2000) Her groundbreaking work exposed the erasure of transgender individuals and the multiple forms of violence suffered in their "invisible" lives in the Canadian context.

violences that occur in individuals' lives and question the notion of gender violence more broadly. Morgan is a 53-year-old transwoman who lives secluded and in poverty. She has internalized the transphobia she is confronted with and told me that "people like me need to be destroyed. If I get killed, the police could care less, I am only one more piece of crap off the street." She has not been able to find a job in recent years because "to most people here I am a freak." Morgan has been physically and sexually assaulted repeatedly in public as well as in her home. Her words make drastically clear that she has internalized the social asymmetry of her status. Following Bourdieu (2001), this internalization represents symbolic violence as dominated social groups accept imposed categories (like that of a "freak") and evaluate their conditions through these frames and think of their predicament as normal, thus perpetuating unequal social structures.

Menjívar and Abrego (2012) recently introduced the term of "legal violence" when focusing on the underside of current immigration law in the US and its hidden and violent effects in the lives of individuals. Similarly, laws pertaining to gender identity and gender marker (change) on documents create an axis of stratification that, like other forms of stratification, significantly shapes life chances. Morgan does not drive her car after 9 in the evening out of fear of being pulled over by the police. Her birth certificate cannot be changed in the jurisdiction where she lives; she does not have a driver's license that matches her expressed identity and name. Her experiences of violence and harassment are typical for many of the people I encountered and interviewed. Their lives are rendered invisible, powerfully demonstrating that trans folks are often excluded from full citizenship (Monro and Warren 2004). They cannot use the legal system to protect themselves from violence or seek retribution, for these legal/criminal justice structures

are often a source of the violence they experience (Grant et al. 2011, Wolff and Cokely 2007). Valentine (2007) emphasizes as well that the state must be understood as perpetrator of violence against trans individuals through restriction and the reshaping of citizenship and through legitimating what counts as violent. Reduction of the problem to one kind of violence (for example, interpersonal violence) erases the others. While Valentine (2007) is concerned with the complete erasure of individuals who do not identify under the institutionalized category of transgender but may count as such, I am concerned with the omission of transgender experiences altogether. Conventional definitions of gender violence often exclude the experiences of trans people and gender violence, gender based violence and violence against women are used synonymously in the international policy discourse and in sociological literature.

Research on the victimization experiences of transgender persons evidences that gendered violence is more than violence against women, and that we need new tools to assess it. Hill (2003) suggests a framework of genderism, transphobia, and genderbashing for the study of transgender violence. Genderism is the cultural discomfort with the notion of a gender continuum, transphobia is the emotional disgust towards individuals who do not conform to gender expectations, and genderbashing is the fear manifest in acts of violence (Hill 2003). Being or looking trans challenges the heterosexist "gender order" (Connell 2002) by expressing a non-normative gender. Gender and hate crime theory suggest that being transgender challenges the gender order even more than being woman or gay (Gressgard 2010, Lynch 2005, Tomsen and Mason 2001). Namaste (1996) argues that "gaybashing" really is "genderbashing" as the perceived transgressions of normative sex-gender relations motivate most aggressive incidents. "Effeminate" men

and "masculine" women are most at risk for assault, and "gender [expression] is used as a cue to locate lesbians and gay men" (Namaste 1996: 225). Transgender people are often stereotyped as "deserving" violence (Bettcher 2007, Witten and Eyler 1999), which makes them particularly vulnerable to gender policing through harassment and interpersonal violence perpetrated by "gender defenders" who police strict boundaries between men and women and punish individuals who transgress them (Bornstein 1994). Thus, transphobic violence functions as "gender border patrol" for a powerful dichotomous gender system (Lynch 2005).

Evidence of transgender violence around the globe

Violent abuse and its mental health consequences are serious, frequent, and lifelong experiences in the majority of transgender-identified populations (Kidd &Witten 2007, Namaste 2000; Witten & Eyler 1999). The March 2012 update of the TransMurderMonitoring Project reveals a total of 816 reported killings of trans people in 55 countries worldwide from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2011. The update shows an exponential increase in reported killings of trans people over the last four years. In 2008, 141 cases were reported, in 2009 213 cases, in 2010 214 cases, and in 2011 a 58 percent increase from 2008 to 248 (TMM 2012). Compared to victimization patterns of the general population, violence against transgender people can be particularly brutal (Bettcher 2007, Kidd & Witten 2007, Lynch 2005). It is twice as likely to cause injury and four times as likely to cause hospitalization (Lynch 2005). In an extensive review of data from the United States, Stotzer (2009) found violent victimization rates between 33

percent and 65 percent in transgender samples, with average verbal abuse rates above 80

percent. The first national Transgender Discrimination Survey published in February

2011 was based on the largest transgender sample (n=6450) in the history of transgender

studies in the United States. Over half of the respondents (53 percent) reported being

verbally harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation, including hotels,

restaurants, buses, airports and government agencies (Grant et al. 2011).

Research has shown that victims of hate crimes experience higher levels of

psychological distress and anxiety than other victims (Perry 2003). In the United States

transgender persons are over 20 times more likely to report attempting suicide (41

percent) than the general population (1.6 percent), with rates rising for those who were

harassed/bullied in school (51 percent), or were victims of physical (61 percent) or sexual

assault (64 percent) (Grant et al. 2011). As becomes clear in the story of Morgan, in

addition to interpersonal violence, transgender people face discrimination in employment,

housing, and healthcare and suffer abuse across social institutions such as the legal,

penal, and military systems. Violence is not only a category for pain, injury and death but

also has a structural component that includes poverty, racism, displacement, pollution,

and hunger (Merry 2009, Galtung 1990). Structural violence intersects with physical

violence in trans lives, as socioeconomic status of trans individuals is the largest predictor

for violent victimization. Additionally, low income individuals have reduced access to

healthcare, legal support and other services, and are thus more prone to be left out of

victim assistance and public discourse (Grant et al. 2011, Lombardi et al. 2001).

In all regions of the world trans individuals face multiple forms of violence on a

daily basis. Seventy-six countries retain laws that are used to criminalize people on the

basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (A/HRC/19/41 2011). In all countries trans individuals face civil harassment, violence and sexual assault; in some state-perpetrated violence through death penalty, death threats, and torture occurs (Human Rights Watch 2009, O'Flaherty and Fisher 2008). Given the universality and severity of gender based violence against gender variant individuals worldwide, Kidd and Witten (2007) argue that transgender violence represents a global pandemic of focused prejudice. The authors review global research and reports on trans violence and conclude that "acts of anti-transgender violence are not isolated incidents of random violence, but instead share the common impetus of the perpetrators' desiring to eradicate a group of people who violate a widely held and popularly reinforced norm of binary gender with a connection to heteronormative sexuality" (Kidd and Witten, 2007: 51). Thus the authors argue that beyond being a serious public health problem, transphobic violence can be viewed as genocide under the UN Convention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, particularly Article 2 that defines genocide as "(a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part" (United Nations 1948). While "gender identity" is not included in the Genocide Convention and transphobic violence cannot be collectively labeled as the dominant culture limits gender to male and female (Kidd and Witten 2007), some progress has been made to address transgender rights as human rights on the global parquet.

Nongovernmental actors pushing forward

Issues of violence and violations of human rights on the grounds of sexuality and gender identity have been addressed by an increasingly influential and sophisticated network of global human rights LGBT activists. The ILGA (International Lesbian and Gay Association), IGLHRC (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission), and Press for Change in the UK are the most important players in this context.[7] The drafting and signing of two high- profile documents, the Declaration of Montreal (International Conference on LGBT Human Rights 2006) and the Yogyakarta Principles (International Commission of Jurists March 2007) on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity by global LGBT activists in 2006 symbolize a significant advance of international LGBT rights.

An impressive group of experts – lawyers and scholars, domestic activists and international professionals, UN- affiliates and NGO (Non Governmental Organizations) leaders – gathered in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in November 2006 to evaluate how existing human rights regulations related to sexual orientation and gender identity. The outcome document, the Yogyakarta Principles (International Commission of Jurists, March 2007), is a compilation of 29 principles which are not "a wishlist – they are not aspirational. They reflect what the law currently says" (Activist's Guide 2010: 36). It is these principles that various states have endorsed rather than the Declaration of Montreal

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[7] For a brief history of international activism see Kollman & Waites (2009) and O'Flaherty & Fisher (2008) On ILGA in the European context: Swiebel (2009)

(Kollman and Waites 2009). They are being used by activists on a daily basis all over the world, as evidenced in personal accounts of global activists in my field research, the tracking system of their implementation into national law on the website www.ypinaction.org, and a recent report on the global impact of the Principles (Ettelbrick and Zeran 2010).[8]

Progress in the UN system

While the Yogyakarta principles are not a binding agreement, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has the mandate to monitor progress for women made in those countries that are the state parties to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Currently 187 states have ratified the CEDAW process, and periodically report to an expert body established in 1982, composed of 23 experts. An Optional Protocol that went into force on 22 December 2000 established a communication procedure that allows individual women, or groups of women, to submit claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention to the Committee. The Protocol also creates an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights. The United States is the only Western country that has not ratified CEDAW to date (Blanchfield 2010, Goldworthy 2005).

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[8] On a more critical note and with reference to Judith Butler's 'heterosexual matrix, Waites (2009) proposes that the entry of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' into human rights discourse can be interpreted as installing a distinctive gender and sexuality matrix, but also that the open and fluid definitions of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' in the Yogyakarta Principles facilitate contestation of these concepts. He argues that that LGBT, queer and allied NGOs should systematically contest these concepts' dominant meanings.

The CEDAW committee evaluates country reports and gives general

recommendations as well as specific suggestions to the state parties. Civil society actors

and NGOs have the opportunity to submit "shadow reports" to complement official

reporting, LGBT organizations regularly take the opportunity to speak up in this context.

In the case of Germany's 6th review in 2008 transgender rights were treated as stand

alone issues by a shadow report (Human Rights and Transsexualism 2008). Spurred by

recent research and shadow reports in 2010, the CEDAW committee adopted two

General Recommendations (27 and 28) specifically addressing intersectionality and thus

issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Recommendation 28 states that "the

discrimination of women based on sex and gender is inextricably linked with other

factors that affect women, such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief , health, status, age,

class, caste, and sexual orientation and gender identity" (Paragraph 18,

CEDAW/C/2010/47/GC.2).

In 2011 the Human Rights Council (HRC) in the UN (replacing the former United

Nations Commission on Human Rights since 2006) passed the first ever UN-resolution

on the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons

(A/HRC/17/L.9/Rev.1. 2011) in history in 2011. It passed with 23 votes in favor, 19

opposed and three abstentions. The HRC is an inter-governmental body, made up of 47

United Nations member states, which are elected by the UN General Assembly within the

United Nations system. The HRC, responsible for strengthening the promotion and

protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights

violations published a report in 2011 on "Discriminatory laws and practices and acts of

violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity"

(A/HRC/19/41 2011). The report inspired Ban Ki-moon's speech in March 2012 at the first HRC hearing on discrimination and violence against LGBT people mentioned above. The report summarized and addressed multiple forms of interpersonal and structural violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in all world regions based on UN sources and, among other things, recommended comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, legal recognition of the preferred gender, free right of assembly and training for law enforcement personnel in all member states. Moreover, the UN Human Rights Commissioner recently released a publication that makes the same argument as the Yogyakarta Principles: LGBT are in fact protected under current Human Rights Law and the Commissioner urges all member states to protect people from transphobic and homophobic violence, prevent torture and degrading treatment, repeal laws criminalizing homosexuality and fluid gender expression, prohibit discrimination and safeguard freedom of expression (UNHCR 2012).

Advancement in some UN agencies and organs – such as the Human Rights Council – do not necessarily spill over to the CSW which to this day reflects heteronormative bias in its "documentary reality" (Eastwood 2006: 186). In her ethnographic exploration of UN forest negotiations, using institutional ethnography, Eastwood (2005, 2006) points out that it is critical to make visible activities that are systematically made invisible by what she calls the documentary reality of the UN. In a "final" text produced by the UN, the politically charged debates, the production process, and the larger discursive realm are subsumed and thus made invisible once consensus is achieved unless a vote is taken. Included in her notion of documentary reality is the fact that official UN documents become the effective reality of the institution as they are used

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in subsequent procedures that are based on these texts. The documentary reality extends even beyond the organization itself as the documents "take on a fairly nebulous status once they are negotiated in that they become available to be taken up in various settings by various people who may be otherwise unconnected with each other" (Eastwood 2006: 187).

Similarly, I turn to the documentary reality of the CSW, and "aim at a knowledge that is essentially an extension of the ordinary ways in which we know our everyday worlds into regions we have not been to, and perhaps could not go to, without the explorer's interest and cartographic skills" (Smith 2005: 2). I take readers to a diplomatic realm that remains inaccessible for most. I am particularly interested in the social production of texts with an institutional ethnographic lens since "texts are people's doing and they enter into and regulate people's doing" (Smith 2005: 228). Moreover, "the larger discursive terrain serves to organize the ways in which actual people and the issues they represent get incorporated into (or disenfranchised from) the policymaking process" (Eastwood 2006: 183). How are trans persons represented or made recognizable to the CSW? In the following I first briefly explain the work of the CSW, and then turn to the analysis of documentary reality through documents, observation and interviews.

Two steps back: the invisibility of transgender locations in UN's CSW

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Established in 1946, the CSW is the principal intergovernmental global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality within the UN system. It meets annually in New York City for two weeks, paralleled by a conference of non-governmental and religious actors who try to educate and lobby state representatives. The CSW meetings are facilitated by five member states which are elected for a biannual term, and prepared and substantively supported by the UN-system, namely staff members of UN Women (before 2011 CSW was supported by staff members of DAW). UN Women is also responsible for the organization of expert groups delivering background papers on the annual priority theme, the coordination of side events held in the United Nations Headquarters during the sessions, and – together with the CSW NGO committee – facilitating the participation of civil society representatives in the Commission's annual session. The goal of the meeting is to shape language for resolutions that may vary over the years, and one central annual outcome document ("The Agreed Conclusions") which then sets a new global guideline for gender equality policy in member states. While the Agreed Conclusions are not binding legal documents they set a symbolic benchmark and reflect the dynamic evolution of global gender equality concepts. Since 1995 they have provided an assessment of the implementation of progress towards gender equality in the 12 critical areas of concern from the Beijing Platform of Action (United Nations 1995), as well as of related gaps and challenges. They also contain a set of concrete

recommendations for action by governments, intergovernmental bodies and other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders, to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local level, and take account of emerging issues.

"The CSW functions in circles," an NGO representative explained to me at the daily morning briefing in the Church Center of the UN, a building that is across the street from the UN Headquarters. "In the core of the circle you have the member states who have their negotiations, the next ring are the side events held by member states and UN agencies, and the outer ring are the parallel events held by civil society members like us, here in the Church Center." The "core of the circle" is comprised by actual members of the Commission. Forty-five member states of the United Nations serve as members of the Commission at any one time, elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution: thirteen members from Africa; eleven from Asia; nine from Latin America and Caribbean; eight from Western Europe and other states and four from Eastern Europe. Members are elected for a period of four years, yet all 193 member states are invited to partake in the negotiations of the Agreed Conclusions, and most of them send delegates to New York City for the annual meeting.

A more invisible actor is the support structure of the CSW provided by the UN-system, including staff members of UN Women, who work year round to prepare and document the CSW meetings and support the facilitator of the meetings (usually a vice chair of the elected Bureau of the CSW consisting of five member states). As the meeting proceeds they compile and update the quickly, sometimes hourly, changing draft conclusions and work towards a frictionless flow of events. Members of the CSW NGO committee, and sometimes representatives of UN Women or the CSW Bureau, appear

daily at morning briefings for the NGOs and give an update on the consultations, answer questions, and function as a link between civil society and members states.

In order for an NGO to be accredited and granted access to the CSW, become recognizable to the UN in an Institutional Ethnographic sense, it has to achieve Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN well in advance through lengthy application procedures (DESA NGO 2013c). I have observed NGO representatives trying to lobby "their language" into the outcome document and by submitting typed and handwritten notes to their countries' UN delegates in country specific civil society briefings, or regional group briefings which may be held (for example the European Union group holds briefings for their civil society members). In these attempts to shape the outcome document they often rely on documentary reality, "agreed language," language that can be found in prior UN documents and resolutions. The battle for gender equality on these various stages is a battle for words that become signifiers and sites for conflict. For more than 15 years a "tug of war over gender" (phrase coined by Buss 2004) has existed, reflecting a collective avoidance of sexuality and gender identity to which I will now turn.

The tug of war over gender continues

The tug of war over gender is the persistent debate that reflects a range of understandings of gender relations between the polarities of a strictly essentialist understanding of gender relations as relations between men and women on the one side, and the questioning of gender and heteronormativity as social constructions on the other. A tension between "woman-feminism" and "gender-feminism" is also reflected in

feminist research strategies in a global context (Lorber 2011, Chow, Segal and Tan 2011). Scholarly attention has been given to the tug of war over the meaning of the word gender as it unfolded during the preparatory meetings for and during the Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing. Baden and Goetz (1997) analyzed the conflicting discourses on the relevance and meaning of gender in Beijing 1995. The concept of gender was challenged at the NGO Forum by activists from the South and right wing groups from all world regions. Activists from the South pointed out that "gender" depoliticizes the power relations between men and women and becomes shorthand for women rather than for the transformation of gender relations. Conservative groups had fought for the removal of gender six months in advance because the notion of a socially constructed gender insinuates the mutability of gender identity. Irene, a UN staff member involved with gender politics in the UN for more than 20 years, remembers the debates and the task force that was established before the actual conference which dealt with heated debates through the night in their meetings in New York City:

> Irene: You know there are the men, there are the women, then there are the bisexual, then there are the transgenders, then there are lesbians etcetera what are the genders? What is this business of gender? ... And while we had a definition of gender relations and gender roles in a report of 1994, the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, in 1995 there was a move by a number of countries but also the Holy See to strike the word gender from the platform for action all together. Oh yes. So they wanted to not to have the word gender at all in the platform. They said we don't know what it means. And then there was this big negotiation facilitated by a delegate from Namibia, there was this task force on the term gender. And all it said was that there isn't a definition…

> Me: Somebody told me before there was a huge discussion

> Irene: It was enormous! In the middle of the night, small conference rooms packed with 500 people! (I2, October 2010)

The "non-definition" of gender mentioned by Irene, found in Annex IV of the report of the Beijing conference, does not in fact define gender and notes that gender needs to be "interpreted and understood as it was in ordinary, generally accepted usage" (United Nations. 1995). As Irene pointed out there is no explanation of what "generally accepted usage" means. In this annex gender "had been deprived of its significance as a radical challenge to the status quo" (Scott, 2010: 9) and it continues to be used as a heteronormative term, rendering transgender locations and a multiplicity of sexualities invisible. Irene's perspective is supported by the literature that the biggest fear of conservative actors like the Holy See is that through the use of the term "gender" issues like homosexuality and fluid gender identities are introduced and acknowledged on the diplomatic level (Bedford 2010, Buss 2004, Baden and Goetz 1997).

The Holy See is the universal government of the Catholic Church and operates from Vatican City State, a sovereign, independent territory of 0.17 square miles with the Pope as its principal. The Holy See is a sovereign juridical entity under international law, and as such became a "Permanent Observer State" at the United Nations on 6 April 1964. It is able to participate in the meetings of all the sessions of the General Assembly and intergovernmental bodies, even though to date it does not hold voting rights. Its rights were extended and spelled out again in UN General Assembly resolutions A/58/314 and A/58/871 in summer 2004, which define its privileged participation rights compared to other observers to the United Nations (Holy See 2011). Its influence in shaping language of UN resolutions, as will be seen below, is one indicator of an increasingly strong supra-national, supra-religious alignment of some religiously motivated member states that seek a hierarchical sex/gender regime based on male supremacy in the UN context (Reilly

2009, Ezeilo 2006, Bayes and Tohidi 2001), and who make reservations to existing

human rights instruments which do not agree with their views.

History is repeated every year when a varying coalition of Holy See and other

member states raise their voices against the use of the term gender in the Agreed

Conclusion and "try to retrograde, even though there is tons of agreed language from

prior years that embraces gender as a concept" (Maria, NGO delegate from Germany).

Despite failure to eliminate "gender" completely in recent years from the Agreed

Conclusions of the CSW, member states bargain and "have to make deals with the Holy

See" (Kuan Yin, state delegate, Asia). An example for such a deal and the ongoing battle

is the fact that in March 2011, "gender studies" was eliminated from the language of the

Agreed Conclusions on the last day of the CSW 55 in order to agree on other passages of

the document (Fieldnote, April 5 2011). The excerpts from the official Holy See

statement (Holy See, 2011a) demonstrate the clear essentialist lines and boundaries that

define the understanding of gender equality and the persistence of the essentialist

influence over past decades:

> As the Conclusions refer to the term "gender", my delegation
> wishes to recall that, since the early 1990s it was gradually
> introduced into non-binding documents negotiated by State
> Parties, and has been commonly used to refer to the two sexes,
> male and female. In treaty law, the only definition of "gender"
> which binds State Parties is that contained in the Rome Statute
> of the International Criminal Court, which states that "the term
> 'gender' refers to the two sexes, male and female, within the
> context of society. The term 'gender' does not indicate any
> meaning different" from the aforementioned definition (Art.
> 7.3)…….Unfortunately during the negotiations of the present
> text, some delegations attempted to advance once again, through
> the vehicle of "gender studies," a radical definition of "gender,"
> which asserts that sexual identity can somehow be adapted
> indefinitely to suit new and different purposes, not recognized in

> international law. In response, in the present text, a new
> preambular paragraph was adopted with a view to eliminating
> doubts about the promotion of a new definition of "gender".
> (Holy See, 2011a)

The statement of the Holy See demonstrates a clear essentialist and exclusive

interpretation of gender as binary category, and also seemingly a conflation of gender

identity and sexual identity. It also demonstrates the strong reliance on agreed language

from prior resolutions and outcome documents of CSW and other commission meetings.

Agreed language is the starting point of the annual meetings. "Draft conclusions"

are, in recent years, usually drawn up and uploaded on the CSW website two weeks in

advance of the meetings. They are compiled by UN Women staff members based on

agreed language from prior years of CSW meetings and other resolutions. In addition to

the responses of member states to the year's priority theme in the plenary meetings,

inputs on language are usually given from member states prior to the consultations to the

bureau of the CSW. As member states submit their revisions and language proposals the

CSW bureau (with the help of the UN Women support structure) updates the draft

conclusions with compiled comments and the document becomes a "compilation draft."

The close examination of these compilations drafts provides an opportunity to unpack the

abstracting mechanisms of the institution and see the text as "bridge between the actual

and the discursive" (Smith 1990: 92). Here is an example from the negotiations of CSW

56, 2012 (Emphasis in original):

> 9. The Commission stresses the centrality of [**Holy See TO DELETE**:
> gender] equality [**Holy See TO ADD**: between men and women] and
> women's empowerment [**India to ADD**: with dignity] in sustainable
> development…[*Text deleted by author*]…It calls for the integration of
> [**Holy See TO DELETE**: gender] perspectives [**Norway TO ADD**: and
> commitments] [**Holy See TO ADD**: that ensure the equal treatment of

men and women] and the [**Australia TO ADD**: full and equal] participation of rural women [**Holy See TO ADD**: on an equal basis with men] in the preparations for outcomes and follow up of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Brazil in 2012, as well as in the internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs and their successor frameworks. (based on E/CN.6/2012/3, para.72 (p); resolution on improvement of situation of women in rural areas A/RES/66/129, OP 9)

(Excerpts of Paragraph 9 of the Compilation Draft Agreed Conclusions of CSW 56, March 3 2012, informally distributed through a NGO mailing list).

The compilation draft gives member states and NGO activists the opportunity to develop counter arguments and new language for the actual informal consultations and to react to the changes proposed. It becomes clear from the data sample above that the tug of war over gender continued in 2012, and that in this sample the representative of the Holy See seeks to abolish and substitute the word gender altogether when in other contexts (like in the example of gender studies from the prior year) its representatives insist on the "general usage" of the word. Thus "gender" is used or not used selectively by the Holy See to fit an oppressive ideology. Within the first three hours of the informal negotiations in 2012, the delegate from the Holy See had the floor six times and urged the replacement of the term gender with "men and women" throughout the outcome document (Fieldnotes, March 1 2012). In the same negotiation Maria, the German NGO delegate who coordinates caucus meetings of Northern NGOs, scribbled phrases on a little notepad. The phrases are concrete wording proposals for specific paragraphs in the Agreed Conclusions referring to "agreed language" of the HRC resolution mentioned above. She needed to work swiftly, as language changes constantly, and thus urged her sitting neighbor from Great Britain to assist by looking up the document number of the HRC resolution as reference to the note. In a break she rushed to the front of the room to

talk to the delegate of the European Union and handed her the notes she had just made. In

this informal way of lobbying in the "corridors of power," as one activist calls it, and

through parallel events across the street NGO activists try to make gender identity and

sexuality recognizable to the CSW. So far their voices have been unheard and gender

identity as an issue is collectively ignored within the intergovernmental body of the

CSW. A UN staff member whose charge was to support the facilitator of the negotiations

in 2012 describes the informal negotiations to which NGO representatives have no

access:

> Renee: Because some states or some of the delegations at the end of the
> day were scared. They wanted the definition of gender. They wanted to
> make sure that it would not give any right to most likely you know gays,
> lesbian, intersex, bisexual people. And yeah I mean they would not be
> speaking about either sexual orientation or gender identity. That was the
> big fear. Although it was never said by any one delegation. It's one of
> these things that was never clear because you sort of derive from the way
> the negotiations are going. (I 5 2012).

Zerubavel (2006) argues in his social analysis of collective denial that the metaphorical

elephant in the room involves an entire social system. The quote above speaks to the fact

that the elephant of gender identity in the conference room is jointly avoided, as Bedford

(2010) also found when analyzing the CSW meetings in 2009. Zerubavel (2006) outlined

the rules of collective denial as characterized by taboo, tact, and power. Negotiations at

the CSW can serve as an example for the politics of denial through power, as delegates

button their lips in regard to gender identity issues in order to achieve textual settlements

and "deals."

No sufficient "deals" could be made at the CSW meetings in 2012. For the second time in history the member states could not agree on an outcome document. The first was in 2003, when the priority theme of the CSW was violence against women (United Nations 2010b). Lamenting the collapse of the negotiations in 2012 in the official press release, Zimbabwe's representative said on behalf of the African Group that her delegation had even agreed to the deletion of some key paragraphs for the sake of consensus. "Emphasizing that the United Nations Charter affirmed the sovereignty of States and their right to maintain their own systems of governance, she said it was the African Group's understanding that the term "gender" referred to "male" and "female," as outlined in the Beijing Declaration" (DPI 2012). As the tug of war over gender continues it is remarkable that delegates refer to the definition of gender in the Platform for Action as outlining gender as male and female, because in fact, it is not outlined as such in the "definition." While the definition in the Platform for Action theoretically leaves space for a changing and fluid understanding of gender, and there is agreed language developed in other entities of the UN-system, the members of the Commission on the Status of Women have so far succeeded in keeping the elephant in the room and continued to silence transgender experiences of violent victimization and thus deny humanity to trans *individuals* by overlooking violations of their human rights.

Conclusion

The extent and severity of transphobic violence worldwide is well documented and prohibited under existing Human Rights Law. Within the UN system it has most recently been addressed in CEDAW and the HRC. Yet transgender lives and transphobic violence are silenced in local communities and at UN's CSW. The ethnographic study of victimization experiences in trans lives and the institutional ethnographic exploration of global gender equality policy negotiation in the CSW -- thought together -- provide an interesting angle for understanding the link between macro-politics and individual micro-experiences. As noted earlier, Valentine (2007) draws attention to representational violations that resonate with larger structural violence. The fact that transgender violence is absent in the Agreed Conclusions is a solid piece of evidence for representational violence. In this perspective CSW's actors that collectively deny and ignore transgender violence become perpetrators, as they allow gender violence to grow in member states. As we can see in available data transphobic violence globally grows in intensity, like the silence itself, "affected not only by the number of people who conspire to maintain it but also by the length of time they manage to do so" (Zerubavel 2006: 58). Some member states and the Permanent Observer Holy See act as "gender border patrol"(Lynch 2005) and "gender defenders" (Bornstein 1994) in the CSW as they continuously protect and police the strict boundaries between two and only two genders in their textual proceedings and the documentary reality of the CSW. In Bourdieu's (2001) conceptualization, "the dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural. This can

lead to a systematic self-depreciation, even self-denigration" (Bourdieu 2001:35). The exemplary experience of Morgan laid out earlier, who (as many other trans individuals) has been violated and internalized her oppression expressed in the quote "I need to be destroyed", makes visible the very link between personal troubles and pubic issues (Mills 1959) as defined by Bourdieu (2001): How can her self-perception as "freak," unprotected, and less than human be anything else when her experience is disenfranchised and silenced by powerful others and institutions? Her day-to-day experience of being persecuted by fellow humans as well as governmental forces such as the police in a jurisdiction where she will never be able to change her birth certificate and match her documentation to her actual gender, reflects symbolic (Bourdieu 2001), legal (Menjivar and Abrego 2012) and representational (Valentine 2007) violence through the collective denial of her existence at the local and global policy level. In an institutional ethnographic sense Morgan is not recognizable at the level of the CSW, because fluid gender identities beyond the fixed boxes of men and women are not recognized; in fact they are collectively suppressed.

Even though Agreed Conclusions of the CSW are not binding documents for state parties, they represent guidelines and symbolic benchmarks than can be activated and instrumentalized by advocates and activists locally, to shape legislation on the state and even more local level. The inclusion of transgender violence in the Agreed Conclusions of the CSW is essential as the CSW reflects a dynamic annual up to date consensus on gender equality. Even though Yogyakarta Principles and recent HRC resolutions elaborate on the applicability of existing Human Rights Law for trans lives, some states, most notably the United States, have not ratified the CEDAW reporting procedure. The

Agreed Conclusions of the CSW as global benchmark purporting specific gender equality

recommendations could thus be a useful and essential instrument for change on the

ground if utilized by gender violence advocates.

This exploration of micro-macro links of (trans)gender violence is a work in

progress and by no means completed. As Dorothy Smith states,

> "The project of inquiry is always open ended. It must be always subject to
> revision, as attention to actualities imposes corrections, takes us by
> surprise, forces rethinking, and works toward some better statement of
> what we have found…it is open to being changed, expanded on, improved
> as research goes forward and as new regions of the relations that rule us
> are brought under ethnographic scrutiny" (Smith 2005: 2f).

In this sense I hope my work can serve as springboard for further research and as food for

thought more generally when we as researchers focus on gender violence.

Representational violence is also perpetrated by sociologists who continue to equate

gender violence with violence against women. Not only actors in the CSW and the people

in the communities I studied but we, as researchers, have to sensitively broaden our view

on multiple gender categories that are fluidly coexisting as we work together to expand

our thinking and theorizing to encompass the complex lived realities we try to explain

and understand.[9]

CHAPTER III

THE INSIDER OUTSIDE: ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCESS TO THE UNITED

NATIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY

Abstract

Literature attests that the Unites Nations (UN) has served as a useful platform for women's activists worldwide to bring in their voices. Particularly in the last four decades women activists have worked their way inside the UN system and developed strategies to shape global gender equality policy. In this paper I interrogate participation possibilities for women at the UN, and explore how actors of civil society navigate lobby-work and access to negotiations of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) UN. Data for this study are derived from ethnographic participant observation of CSW meetings between 2009 and 2012, document analysis, and 20 semi-structured interviews." I utilize feminist concepts of insiderness and outsiderness in the context of standpoint theory (Naples 1996) and institutional ethnography (Smith 2009, 2005; Eastwood 2005).

Data show that many women activists at the CSW perceive themselves as *insiders outside*: They are *insiders* because as women they literally embody the (gender) issues at stake. Yet even as experts and insiders, they often remain *outsiders* of the intergovernmental process, and struggle with fully accessing CSW meetings. Data also substantiate that some activists are *outsiders inside* the heterogeneous group of activists in the global women's movement with regard to (access to) resources, and a North-South power nexus is still at play. I conclude my analysis by examining my own oscillating roles on the insider/outsider spectrum as Northern researcher, former UN intern, and scholar-activist.

> I am standing in front of the UN Headquarters building, it is 8:15
> AM, and I am angry. When I arrived there was already a long line
> of people trying to get into the UN. I was here 3 min after 8 AM,
> but I couldn't get in. I was told by the security guard that I have to
> wait, that my event does not start until 9 AM. This is not even true;
> the event I want to go to starts at 8.45 AM. Other persons pass the
> guard with ease, entering the majestic stairway of the UN
> Headquarters that leads to the main entrance with its airport-like
> security checks. They have the right badge dangling from their
> necks. I "only" have a blue annual pass for the UN and not the red
> additional pass that is required this year. Even though this is my
> third CSW meeting, I needed days to understand the system with
> the red ″side-event″- pass anyway. My colleague Kristy has the red
> pass today. Every organization gets only one red pass and we have
> to share it among the 5 representatives that are here this year. This
> is the highly-praised accessibility of the UN for civil society? This
> is how they value the voices of women? This really is an experience
> of hierarchy, exclusion, and power. But I am on the other side of
> power. I am powerless — an *insider outside*.

> (Transcript of audio-fieldnote, March 2 2012, NYC).

I purposely taped this fieldnote in range of sight of the United Nations (UN)

Headquarters security guard, glowering at him while speaking into my portable tape

recorder. A few minutes later, he gesticulated for me to enter the terrain of what had

been called the "unlikely godmother" (Snyder 2006) of the global women's movement. I

am observing the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) as a

feminist ethnographer. I also attend this global policy meeting as a registered

representative for a feminist Non Governmental Organization (NGO) that has elected

me to be one of five delegates to the UN. I am somewhat of an insider to the processes

within and around a CSW meeting after several years of field research and nine weeks as an intern in the UN. At the same time I am an outsider to the life worlds of most of my research participants that range from women's activists to UN staff, and from diplomats to country delegates and ministers. I am an insider as UN representative of my NGO, but an outsider as non-American in an US-based organization. I am an outsider as member of an NGO to the knowledge-power nexus of intergovernmental processes, yet more privileged than other NGO members by means of education, skin color, and language.

Although Hill Collins' (1990, 1986) concept of the "outsider/within" is attributed specifically to Black feminists in academia, it resonated with me standing in front of the UN headquarters this one cold morning. I developed the notion of an *insider outside* inspired by her writings, and started wondering how my experience and positionality relates to other women's experiences in the CSW and my data more generally. This article is an attempt to combine the reflections of my positionality and the analysis of data from the larger project in a fruitful way. In a much reprinted landmark article in *Qualitative Sociology,* Nancy Naples (1996) explored the concepts of insiderness and outsiderness reflecting on her role as a researcher studying rural women. She argues that insiderness and outsiderness are not static boxes, but fluid categories that may foster agency and open up advantages for the research process. I illustrate this important idea by exploring how NGO activists negotiate access to the UN CSW meetings.

Feminist activists bring insider knowledge about women's experiences and needs to the table of UN negotiations, and are experts/insiders on the very topics negotiated at CSW meetings. Yet my data reveal that they face challenges in terms of access and accessibility of the UN. First, women activists are incorporated but also disenfranchised

at actual CSW negotiations and remain largely outsiders in the process of shaping normative gender policy. In turn this grants them an advantageous monitoring and watchdog-positionality. This is what I termed the vertical aspect of access as it is connected to formalized hierarchy. The vertical aspect of access denotes more or less distance from the powerful, formalized, top on the hierarchical ladder of the UN-system and its members, i.e. governments and country delegates.

Second, there is what I call a horizontal aspect of access. Most feminist movements set out to deconstruct bureaucratized male-centered hierarchies, and emphasize solidarity and sameness as women. Yet I find that not only do women activists face different degrees of vertical outsiderness in relation to the complex UN system, but also there is differences *between* women activists on the horizontal level that regulate their access to CSW meetings and related NGO spaces. These findings are uncomfortable, as they question a romanticized collective women's movement. My data rather confirm that assumed alliances based on gender often fail to produce collective emancipation (Mohanty 2003, Hill Collins 1986).

My data reflect situated accessibility as access shifts and varies, depending on multiple interconnected locations[10] such as geopolitical background, language, institutional background, social networks and notoriety within the UN system and activist networks, as well as access to knowledge about institutional processes that shape access to and accessibility of UN meetings. While the UN remains an important and vibrant platform of a transnational women's movement, women activists at the CSW who have

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[10] I deliberately use "interconnected" here to replace the term "intersecting." The static nature of "intersections" as resembled by street intersections was criticized by Bhavnani (2007), who suggested to use "interconnections" to connote more fluidity and emphasize women's agency when co-constructing global feminist ethnographies.

less economic, educational, cultural, and social resources struggle to participate fully as has been noted for other UN conferences (Desai 2007b, Naples 2002). Thus, paradoxically, the more "inside" a woman may be in terms of the embodiment of her social location under consideration (e.g. being a rural woman who does not speak English at the CSW meeting that focused on rural women in 2012), the more outside she becomes in terms of the factual production of global gender equality policy.

While there is significant literature on transnational feminist networks (Ferree and Tripp 2006, Moghadam 2005, Antrobus 2004, Naples 2002), this article addresses the gap in the literature about the interactional and organizational level of gender policy development within the UN and the social construction of global gender policy negotiations (Miller, Razavi and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development 1998, Staudt 1997). Comprising193 member states the UN, plays a crucial role in the advancement of global gender equality by setting binding agendas to end gendered discrimination, establishing policy guidelines, and providing resources for projects in member states. Particularly in the last few decades the UN has created important physical and virtual space for the evolution of a global women's movement (Moghadam 2005, Antrobus 2004) and a global gender equality regime (Kardam 2004). This movement has centered around the Women World Conferences since 1975 (Desai 2009, Ferree and Tripp 2006, United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996). Solidarities were built among women that "cemented women's agency in the global era" (Desai 2002: 31), but this new era also had to grapple with challenges and the reproduction of inequalities between women from the North and South (Desai 2009, Naples 2002), persisting gender inequality on a global scale (World Bank 2011, Bose and Kim 2009, Fuchs Epstein

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2007), and a lack of gender balance and support within the UN itself (Sandler and Rao 2012, United Nations 2010a, Warburg and Suban 2006).

In much of the aforementioned research, civil society is pitted against global governance actors or state actors and cast in a dichotomy that represents powerful "insiders" who define the agenda and create policy and grassroots activist, "outsiders" who try to influence the process and lobby stakeholders. I purposely utilize quotation marks with "insider" and "outsider" because this artificial dichotomy does not fit empirical reality or feminist epistemology. Feminist thought has traditionally been critical of dichotomies such as public/private, patriarchy/capitalism, man/woman, or experience/analysis. The insider/outsider dichotomy and its implicit privileging of knowledge produced by one or the other side have been questioned in mainstream sociology (Bulmer 1982, Merton 1972). Yet feminist standpoint theorists have confronted dominant discourses of objectivity more directly and systematically developed a more nuanced and fluid understanding of insiderness and outsiderness. This has been accomplished not by privileging one side of knowledge over the other, but by deconstructing the dichotomy itself (Hekman 1997).

Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Insider/Outsider Dilemma

Unfolding against the backdrop of Marxist analysis, feminist research has always been concerned with the construction and meaning of knowledge in a world that is unequally structured by gender, but also race, class, sexuality, ability, age, and other socioeconomic markers. Those who occupy positions of privilege and power have the means to manufacture norms and hegemonic material and immaterial culture. The powerful and privileged construct what counts as knowledge and truth in society (Harding 2007, Smith 1990, Hill Collins 1990). The chimera of value free research has been debunked and replaced by concepts of "conscious partiality" (Mies 1977/1983 cited in Mies 2007), "strong objectivity" (Harding 2004) or "feminist objectivity" (Bhavnani 1993).

Feminist standpoint theorists argue that knowledge is always mediated by an individual's standpoint, a position in a sociopolitical formation at a specific point in history (Hawkesworth 2007). Along these lines feminists induced a paradigm shift by focusing on the production of knowledge, asking who can know what, and under what circumstances (Hesse-Biber 2007; Hawkesworth 2007). Standpoint theory addresses the situatedness of knowledge and questions and the way power influences knowledge. Naples (2003, 2007) has extracted three major approaches to a construction of standpoint in the literature: as embodied in social location/experience, as constructed in community (communal-relational), and as a site through which to begin inquiry. She makes the case for a multidimensional, materialist feminist standpoint theory that integrates insights of postmodernist approaches to power, knowledge, and subjectivity and is rooted in socialist

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feminist theories influenced by African American, Third World, and Chicana feminists who contributed to standpoint theory.

Inextricably linked to the notion of standpoint are the questions of insiderness and outsiderness. These have been extensively discussed in methodological literature in terms of advantages and disadvantages of being an insider, native, or member of any given ethnographic setting (Rogers and McKibben 2010, Chavez 2008, Acker 2000). In feminist research the researcher (outsider)/participant (insider) dichotomy unmasks a relationship of power (Edmonds-Cady 2011, Sprague 2005). Researchers, in their position of power, can decide what counts as knowledge and thus extract, package, and disseminate data in exploitative ways. Depending on where a researcher is positioned certain aspects of the data are more prominent than others. The question remains about whether or not this creates an undesirable bias or whether it can lead to even better results (Reay 1996).

Standpoint theory opens up the possibility to interrogate insider/outsider status as relevant in terms of knowledge production. Naples (1996) overcomes dualisms and offers an insightful spin on the insider/outsider phenomenon in fieldwork with a feminist standpoint lens: Field researchers are simultaneously insiders and outsiders (especially when researching their country of origin), thus insiderness/outsiderness "are not fixed or static positions but ever-shifting and permeable social locations" (p.139). She revisits classic sociological notions of the stranger by Simmel and Schutz as well as feminist literature and concludes that the insider/outsider distinction masks power differentials and experiential differences between researcher and researched. It also sets up a false separation that neglects the social construction of insiderness and outsiderness. Building

on the work of Naples (1996), I demonstrate that insiderness and outsiderness are shifting categories for the women activists, country delegates, and UN staff members I interviewed. Insiderness and outsiderness shifts as well for myself as a researcher/activist/former intern assisting in the organization of CSW meetings, to which I now turn.

The Commission on the Status of Women

My research site is the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) which was established in 1946 as a functional commission and intergovernmental body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN) dedicated exclusively to advancement of women and gender equality. During its first decades of existence the CSW fostered its place in the UN system through the four World Women's Conferences (Winslow 1995, Reanda 1999). In 1987, its mandate was expanded to monitor the implementation of internationally agreed measures such as outcome documents from the international women's conferences (United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996).

The members of the CSW convene annually at the UN Headquarters in New York to formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality. The annual 10 working days of negotiations in late February/early March involve member states of the UN, representatives of the UN-system, invited academic experts. There are also grassroots organizations which hold parallel events during the CSW meeting and make use of the convention to influence representatives of member states. Since 1996 the outcome of the

annual meetings is a document called "Agreed Conclusions". The meeting focuses one or more priority themes and the final document constitutes binding policy guidelines for all member states (For a detailed history of the CSW see United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996 and United Nations 2006).

Forty-five member states of the United Nations serve as members of the Commission at any one time on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, yet all 193 member states are invited to partake in the negotiations of the Agreed Conclusions, and most send delegates to New York City (CSW 2013). The support structure of the CSW is provided by the UN-system, through UN Women, the new gender equality architecture in the UN System that became operational in 2011. Staff members of UN Women (formerly staff members of DAW, the Division for the Advancement of Women) work year round to prepare and document the CSW meetings, and support the facilitator of the meetings. The meeting facilitator is the vice chair of the elected bureau of the CSW consisting of five member states. The staff not only helps to prepare for the meetings but also keeps the document up-to-date as it changes, sometimes hourly, allowing a frictionless flow of events. The final product, the Agreed Conclusions, provide normative guidelines that can be used as an on the ground tool in member states by activists (Bedford 2010), yet accountability mechanisms for states are underutilized and underdeveloped (Gaer 2009).

As noted above, the findings reported here are drawn from an ethnographic study conducted from 2009-2012 to explore the social construction of gender equality policy in the United Nations. My goal was to unpack some of the processes and politics of knowledge and norm-production in the CSW. The database consists of 700 of hours of ethnographic participant observation and informal field conversations documented by extensive fieldnotes, documents, images, recorded events and memos from the rooms of the UN headquarters in New York City/NY. Much of the data were collected during a two month internship in the fall of 2010 in the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).[11] After my internship I accessed the field site through an annual UN ground-pass in my capacity as UN delegate and elected member of the International Committee of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS). In this capacity I also observed and documented the CSW 53 meeting in 2009, the CSW 55 meeting in 2011, and the CSW 56 meeting in 2011. In addition I tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with UN staff members involved in the organizational logistics of the CSW, diplomats, country delegates, and global gender activists working in and around the CSW with an average interview time of one hour. I planned to interview not only NGO activists, but also diplomats and UN staff.

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[11] As of January 2011 DAW has merged into the new UN gender architecture UN Women together with three other gender entities in the UN system.

However, as I later describe, diplomats, UN staff, and country delegates turned out to be a hard to reach population. Attempts to systematically access these participants through letters, emails, and phone calls failed. I thus relied heavily on a key informant in middle management within the UN system who I met during my internship who helped to establish contacts by vouching for me and introducing me to potential interviewees, either through email or personally. I used an interview schedule with questions around four thematic blocks: the participant's history/career in UN work, understandings of gender equality, processes of knowledge production and interaction among different actors within and outside the CSW, and gender in the UN system. Twelve of these interviews were conducted and recorded by means of online videoconferencing software, and eight in face to face settings. Fieldnotes and interviews have been transcribed into digital word processing files, and I utilized the software Atlas-TI to organize and manage the project.[12]

I adopted the constructivist grounded theory approach of Charmaz (2009, 2006) as analytical strategy. This approach involves simultaneous data collection and analysis, pursuit of emergent themes through early data analysis, and inductive construction of categories and the integration of categories into a theoretical framework. Thus initial coding of the data was an open coding process. I then engaged in several rounds of focused coding in a more directed, selective, and conceptual approach. Data analysis alternated with, as well as guided, further data collection (theoretical sampling) in a cyclical process that allowed me to substantiate emergent concepts with new data and

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[12] The project is approved by the IRB of the University of Akron. Participants that were also SWS members were exempt from consent forms; all others have initialed consent forms in which I guaranteed confidentiality. I thus use pseudonyms for all participants in this paper.

extensive theoretical memo writing. For example, "access" and "accessibility" emerged as themes in my second field-research visit in 2010. I thus made an effort to meet long time activists who were able to speak about changes they perceived in terms of accessing the CSW over time. I also asked specifically about perceived access and accessibility in all the subsequent interviews with UN staff and diplomats.

I situated myself as a feminist sociologist, with the understanding that there is no single feminist methodology, and no one correct feminist method, but "multiple feminist lenses" (Hesse-Biber 2007:4) through which we can approach our work. In this context I honored basic interrelated tenets of feminist methodology, as I sought to challenge gender-neutral theories and ask new questions. I attempt to "study up" by examining elites and high level diplomatic discourse, address issues of power and authority, and acknowledge subjectivity and reflexivity in the practice of research (Sprague 2005, Pillow 2003). By doing so I hope the findings of this study will make a contribution to positive social change for women locally and globally.

In the project overall, I strive to apply institutional ethnography (Smith 2005,1990) as it emphasizes standpoint as the entry point to research and makes connections between individual lives, professional practice, and policy making. Such connections are accomplished primarily through what Smith (2005,1990) has labeled textually-mediated social organization. Institutional ethnography (IE) is grounded firmly in fieldwork study of texts-in-use and aims to lay bare often invisible "ruling relations." Smith (2005) describes IE as a method of inquiry, but only to emphasize the character of "discovery" rather than the testing of a hypothesis and the explication of theory as

analysis of the empirical. It is the spirit of reflexivity that suggests utilizing my own

subjectivity, in both, standpoint theory and grounded theory that I use as heuristic device.

Results

The concern, anger, and discomfort voiced by women activist in regard to their

lack of accessibility of the UN CSW meetings contradicted the participatory rhetoric,

honest concern, and practical effort of UN Women staff members. Access and

accessibility emerged as multifaceted categories along two dimensions. First, access has a

hierarchical/vertical meaning. Relatively powerless activists try to access those higher in

status, government officials and diplomats, to influence outcome documents and to shape

the agenda. On this hierarchical dimension women often find themselves as *insiders*

outside the doors of actual negotiations. They are left to work the "corridors of power"

instead of the conference rooms. The formal accreditation processes, access to the UN

Head Quarters building, access to draft conclusions and negotiations, and access to

information technology and resources emerged as themes throughout the data.

Second, the horizontal dimension of access involves the multivocality of the

global women's movement and the differences between those who constitute the

seemingly monolithic block of "global sisterhood" at CSW meetings. Geopolitical and

class differences regulate the resources available to activists and thus the volume and

efficiency of their voices. Some activists remain *outsiders inside* the hustle and bustle of

annual CSW women's activism due to a lack of resources in terms of money, language, and information. Others move outside the NGO realm by being co-opted into double roles by governments, so they simultaneously serve as representatives for NGOs and country delegates. Depending on the locus of the practitioner, the insider/outsider boundaries shift, as did my own positionality and thus my access to research site. I also generate strong objectivity through strong reflexivity (Harding 2007, 2004) as I critically examine the nature of my role(s) as a feminist researcher and as an active agent in constructing knowledge (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007, Fonow and Cook 2005).

Insiders outside – Navigating access to CSW negotiations

"Who is accepted as authentic voice? Who do we listen to? Who can be listened to?" says a woman loudly in a microphone while about 120 people nod, all women with the exception of two men, who have crammed themselves into a small conference room in the Church Center. A sign that denotes a 70 people limitation is covered up by a colorful phalanx of tightly standing women who did not find a place to sit on the floor. The Middle Eastern gender violence activist exemplifies standpoint theory in her poignant questions: along the lines of Smith (1990) she goes on to explain that women rarely if ever define dominant culture as they do not have political, economic, or social power, and that culture is politically manipulated (FN 022812[13]). "Who can be listened

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[13] In this paper I cite direct quotes from participants with quotation marks and denote material from fieldnotes that I paraphrased for the paper with "FN" for fieldnote and the date the data was recorded (MMDDYY).

to" is a central question to the examination of women's participation in shaping CSW meetings. In the context of UN negotiations, Eastwood (2006) coined the term "intentional institutional capture" as practitioners have to translate their experiences and interests into something that is recognizable by the organization and by which their doings become recognizable and "institutionally accountable" (p.189). Intentional institutional capture is the ability of activists to translate their interests into institutional discourse and to effectively use appropriate terminology and processes in order to shape institutional outcomes. To be an effective participant, one has to follow strict guidelines and know the discursive terrain (Eastwood 2006). Analysis of my ethnographic data suggests that women of different social locations are publicly praised by the UN system as "experts" and "insiders" in terms of knowledge about women's conditions and solutions to abate their subordination locally and globally, yet participation in the construction of global gender policy remains an exclusive business. Some voices remain unheard and beyond institutional capture.

A CSW meeting can be graphically represented as circles, as a research participant suggested in a field conversation (FN 030412). The circles denote different levels of power, reminiscent of Wallerstein's (2004) typology of core, semi-periphery,and periphery countries he developed to explain the world system (see Figure 2).
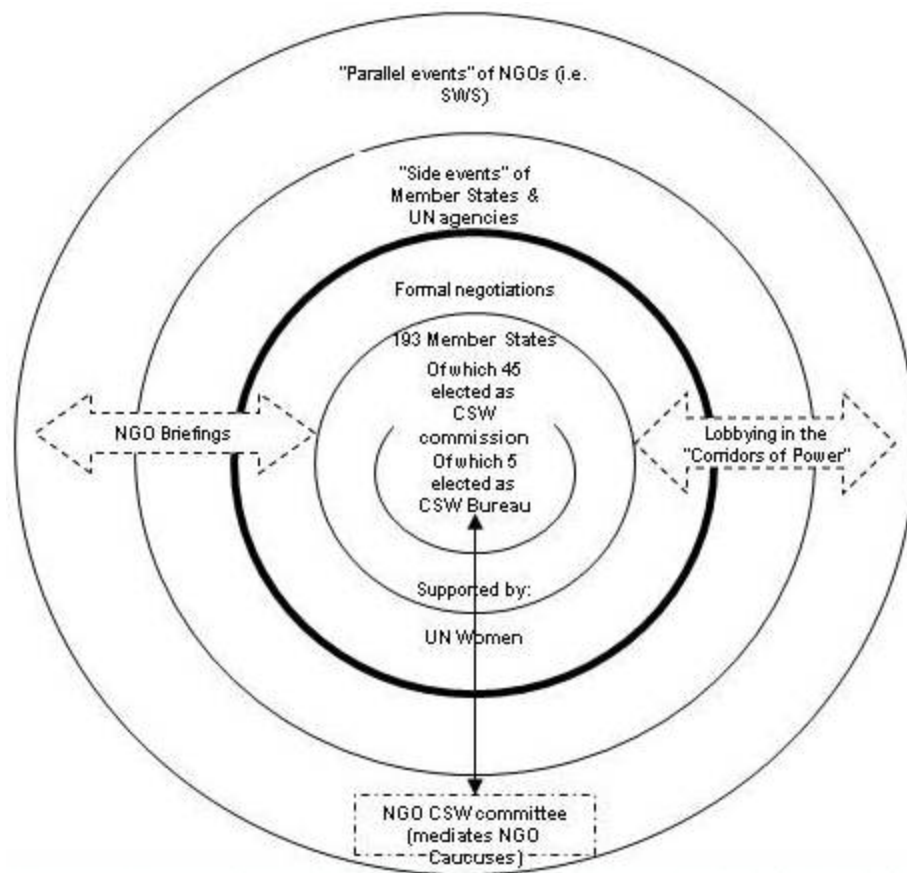
Figure 2 How the CSW works

In the core of the "world system" of the CSW are appointed representatives of

member states who constitute the main cast with the maximum power to define

knowledge and process, collaborating in the intergovernmental process of negotiating the

Agreed Conclusions. These can be diplomats who work at the mission of the country on

site, or political officials that are sent from the home country for specific negotiations

(e.g. women's affairs ministers, in case of the CSW). The semi-peripheral ring is made up

of "side events," held by member states and UN agencies on UN premises. These are

more informal gatherings in which member states and UN agencies present new reports

and programs to advance gender equality in their local contexts. The outer ring, literally

peripheral and dislocated from the UN headquarters, is constituted by "parallel events"

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organized by women's NGOs and faith communities in the "Church Center," a building across from the UN Headquarters. As external actors and imaginary fourth ring we could conceptualize women and men around the world who could not access the CSW for one or more reasons that I spell out below.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor lends itself to explain how these different leels interact and to dissect the dynamics of an actual CSW meeting. It conceptualizes social interaction as theatrical performance. He makes an important distinction between "front stage" and "back stage" behavior. As the term implies, "front stage" actions are visible to the audience and are part of the performance. People engage in "back stage" behaviors when no audience is present. The different circles largely constitute front stages where actors formally perform their roles according to socially expected scripts, adhere to conventions, and meet the audience. Back stages at the CSW are informal meetings and lunches, as well as the negotiations of the Agreed Conclusions that are closed meetings called "informals."

Here, delegates of member states get together and sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, bargain the language of the outcome document. The delegates are the insiders with a back stage pass, while the outsiders, NGOs and observers can function as audience only at the discretion of the facilitator. NGOs meet at the parallel events but also in regional caucuses that meet regularly in the rooms of the Church Center, to exchange information, to develop wording to be lobbied into the Agreed Conclusions and to prepare statements to be delivered at varying official occasions. It is a lively, buzzing gathering of hundreds of women (and some men) – some in culturally

traditional dresses, others in business and casual wear – gathering in small seminar rooms, bursting elevators, and congested hallways.

Stages of interaction intersect in the course of lobby-work, and activists are linked and mingle in caucuses and briefings. They form a colorful ever changing tapestry of feminist global civil society, establishing new connections or rejoicing in old friendships that have formed over the past years of CSW attendance. These activists are insiders in terms of their expertise about women's lives yet meet outside the formal meeting space of the CSW. These *insiders outside* are organized by an association of NGOs, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (NGO CSW/NY with sister associations in Vienna and Geneva). NGO CSW organizes the NGO Consultation Day in preparation for the CSW sessions that usually takes place a couple of days before the opening ceremony of CSW meetings and functions as training and orientation day for newcomers to the CSW and as a networking platform for seasoned activists. The NGO CSW/NY administers the space of the Church Center to activists who want to organize a parallel event and facilitates a "morning briefing" every day at 8:45 to 9:45 AM to share updates on the negotiations, to coordinate events such as a traditional march on International Women's Day (March 8), and to address any upcoming issues. NGO CSW/NY for the first time in 2012 also facilitated meetings between UN Women and representatives of regional NGO caucuses, as UN Women established NGO advisory boards (UNWomen 2012). Some regions and member states offer one to two briefings for civil society to explicate their position and display an effort to listen to the voices of "their" civil society.The next section will show how the gilded gates of the UN are constructed through the formal process of ECOSOC accreditation.

Access through ECOSOC accreditation. The consultative relationship with

ECOSOC is governed by a resolution (ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31) which outlines the

eligibility requirements for consultative status, and the rights and obligations of NGOs.

While all NGOs dealing with social or economic matters can apply for consultative

status, application procedures are lengthy (UN Department of Economic and Social

Affairs 2012) and have been identified as a barrier to accessing the UN by UN analysts

(Zettler 2009). Historically the first venue by which non-governmental organizations took

a role in formal UN deliberations was through the Economic and Social Council

(ECOSOC). Forty-one NGOs were granted consultative status by the council in 1946; by

1992 more that 700 NGOs had attained consultative status and the number has been

steadily increasing ever since to 3,743 organizations by February 1st 2013 (DESA NGO

2013c). The number of NGOs in consultative status from the South is increasing every

year, but the vast majority is still from the global North. Large "super NGOs" (Gordenker

and Weiss 1996) are better resourced, with greater access to worldwide conferences and

meetings. As a result, they are in a better position to influence policy making at the state

and global level, promoting agendas which may or may not be advantageous to the South

(Bedford 2010, Zettler 2009).

Activists utilize the status as an accredited NGO: "We NGOs do not only have a

right to access the CSW, we have an obligation to be the watchdog per definition of the

consultative status!" said Marsha, the spokesperson of the North-America/Europe/Canada

caucus in 2012 in one particular morning briefing. I noted in my fieldnotes that she

turned directly to the European diplomat who came as representative of the CSW bureau

to answer questions for 10 minutes this morning and said "If you do not let us into the

meetings we are breaking our contract with the ECOSOC!" A murmur was audible among the approximately 100 women present, and some chuckles, as Marsha insinuates ECOSOC resolution (1996/31) that regulates NGOs access and affirms the right to access (FN030212).[14]

Consultative status also structures intentional institutional capture as laid out by Eastwood (2006), as it defines formalized ways to convey one's agenda and grants increased opportunities of intervention in the CSW meeting. For example, NGOs with ECOSOC status may deliver written and oral statements. Participation and application procedures for oral statements require institutional knowledge, as well as access to, and knowledge about, information technology. This in turn privileges super NGOs and coalitions that often absorb critical voices and whose "authenticity" as representative of marginalized populations can be questioned. Feminists have criticized North-centered coalitions like this because women's voices are lumped together and sold as an artificial unified voice of the "global women's movement" (Ferree 2006, Naples 2002, Bergeron 2001). In the case of the CSW, the neatly canned 3-minute interventions often have the subtle imprint of privileged Northern spokespersons with resources to navigate the system better.

Access to the UN Headquarters. Access to UN buildings is important because it is a pre-requisite for lobby-work, creative attempts and informal interventions to influence decisions made by officials. Access to delegates and UN staff is seen by many as

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[14] NGOs can also access the UN from through the Department of Public Information (DPI), which was established in 1946. DPI is the public voice of the UN. Its function is to promote global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the United Nations. Over 1,340 NGOs are associated with DPI, which supports their efforts to interact effectively with the UN in their areas of expertise (http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2013/ngo760.doc.htm).

yardstick for how open the UN really is for civil society participation. My own experience of the "power of the badge" sparked my reflexivity as *insider outside,* as explicated in the fieldnote preceding this article. The "blue pass" I described is the annual pass, available only to official representatives of accredited NGOs. To get this pass, the representatives go to an UN office building. They need an official letter modeled after a sample provided on the UN website from their NGO. This letter needs to be turned in and exchanged for a document in an office hidden in one of the uniform corridors of the UN office towers in New York City. There usually is a wait at this office. In lieu of an Annual Pass, activists can obtain a CSW pass that is only good for the two weeks of the CSW session. A picture is taken and the pass is printed in the pass office on 1st Street. On the first days of the CSW session there will be long lines and waits of three hours or more to get the blue badge. One needs to be able-bodied, in good health, and prepared for the weather while standing out on the sidewalk. For example it snowed one year and rained another during my field research, making it uncomfortable and difficult to obtain a pass.

More than 4,000 civil society members were registered for the meeting in 2012; about 1,000 were present at the meetings on any given day. Yet only about 400 "secondary access passes" (one per accredited organization) are given out to enter the UN Headquarters to sit in on official CSW meetings, panels, and roundtables. These are referred to as "orange badges." "Before renovations started on the aging General Assembly building, the CSW session took place in the conference area, to the left past the bookstore on the lower level. The sessions were in a large hall with visitor seating in a balcony and anyone with a blue badge could enter. Sometimes the balcony was packed and only standing room was available. If you were there at the beginning of the day, you

could get a seat in the lower balcony just off the delegates' floor and sometimes get a copy of delegate handouts" said Ingrid, a US activist. The orange badge has been given out since 2010, as reconstruction work of the historic re-modeling of the UN, ironically titled "Capital Master Plan" by its inventors (United Nations 2013), limits interaction space.

Access to the UN Headquarters, to the corridor of power, is a sticky issue discussed every day in the morning briefings of the NGO CSW/NY. Until 2009, the daily NGO briefings were held in the UN Assembly Hall before the meetings, but they have now been pushed into the Church Center. Women get discouraged and even enraged about the limited access to the "official" buildings. Access is made more difficult by the sheer numbers of activists at CSW meetings which is unique among other commissions of the UN (DESA NGO 2013b). Access policies are enforced very strictly and every badge is checked. Here the hierarchy of the assembly hall is mirrored by a logic of secondary access passes and tickets that distinguish haves and have-nots. Overflow rooms are requested in the Church Center for the women who do not want to deal with the tight security screenings and who would rather gather around a screen showing online live streaming of events that are published on the CSW website. Some choose not to expose themselves to the security screenings and opt out of participation, as Michelle, an US scholar-activist explained:

> In fact the third year that I went, and I got my students into the back room and that was the last year we had that access. The last two years really have been pretty frustrating. The first year we were told it was because of the construction and so much of the building was closed off and the meetings were in the temporary building on the lawn and so it was much smaller. So they were limiting access that way. In fact last year, when I went I only went to side events. That's the first time that's

ever happened that I did not go into any official sessions. The first two years, I went to very few side events, I was mostly in the official sessions. That has been frustrating. And I think there is legitimate reason for concern. Are they trying to limit NGO participation?

(I 16, tenured academic, approx 60 years old, white).

Like Michelle, many representatives of civil society are critical about the fact that they are pushed back into the periphery and perceive a symbolic and physical exclusion from the master's house through the Master Plan which is interpreted by many activists as an excuse. Instead of participating in the intergovernmental process, civil society is encouraged to organize in regional NGO caucuses and to lobby their own government representatives individually, as well as to approach delegates from other countries or regional groups.

This "outside" or off-stage, in Goffmanian terms (Goffman 1956), is where individual actors meet the audience members independently of the team performance on the front-stage. Civil society members and delegates interact on the fringes of the overwhelming event schedule of these two weeks. The *outside* becomes literal as NGOs are repeatedly advised to "meet your delegate outside in the corridor or go for a coffee" in civil society briefings. However, NGO representatives try to get to the core of the ring, the *inside* of negotiations of the Agreed Conclusions. They claim their insider status as experts on women's location by lobbying "their language" into the outcome document. Practitioners submit typed and handwritten notes to their delegates in country specific civil society briefings, or regional group briefings which may be held. Marsha, introduced above, found a creative strategy of access to do exactly that, and undermined the authority of the badge for 30 influential minutes:

I wanted to go to this commission meeting, and I ran there and there was this big blue security guy and asked for my orange badge. My colleague had it that day and I said, I don't have it, I forgot it, but I am supposed to speak for my regional NGO caucus in this meeting. And he said no way I get in there. And so I went to the cafeteria, and saw these sisters of Notre Dames. So I asked them if I could borrow their badge for a half an hour, ran into the meeting and talked to my delegate, told her to put in this CEDAW text. And then I had 20 minutes left from these 30 minutes. So I sat down and wrote a note because I thought I may be able to also approach the EU delegate. And then I saw Azerbaijan delegate and took the chance to slip her a note of the text as well.

(I 6, follow up interview, December 2012)

The battle for gender equality on these various stages is a battle for language, a battle for words that become signifiers and sites for conflict. The chasing down of drafts of the outcome documents that are bargained in the official negotiations constitutes the main plot of the CSW. It is an "annual scavenger hunt" as one activist put it, or "collective hysteria" in the words of an UN staff member, to retrieve updated and informally circulated versions of the outcome document with the goal of being up-to-date and able to craft language and notes for delegates that will fit the current version of the text, as Marsha explained above.

Access to draft conclusions. Because activists try to shape the language of the document, access to updated versions of the draft conclusions is essential. Access to this document is sketchy; there is no formal mechanism regulating the communication of an updated draft to civil society. Some NGOs are able to obtain an updated draft (e.g. from their country delegations), yet most practitioners are dependent on others who share available drafts. In the North America/Europe/Canada caucus women pointed out a tall, blond women around

40 to me, "you can ask Irma for a second compilation, she got it from the EU I think." As I approached Irma, she seemed to already know what I want. She had a stack of business cards in her hand from women who shared their contact details in order to get the updated draft of the Agreed Conclusions. As I hand her my business card, she said "I email it to you, but you never got it from me, if you understand" (FN 030412). At this time during my field research I sometimes wonder in my fieldnotes "what the big deal is" with these draft conclusions. It is an UN text that – like other UN texts – "take[s] on a fairly nebulous status once they are negotiated in that they become available to be taken up in various settings by various people who may be otherwise unconnected with each other" (Eastwood 2006: 187).

They are not binding documents and many actors from all sides admit that only a few people ever read them and even fewer actors try to implement them around the world. Yet, it is a document that has symbolic weight as normative written guideline that can be used as a tool of social change. One of the biggest payoffs of the CSW meetings for activists is when they see that "their language," their voice, shows up in the final document and they have shaped the canon of global gender equality guidelines. At the European Union (EU) briefing (FN 022812) one activist asks: "When will we get access to conclusions? We should be informed about agreed conclusions because we have to make comments and so help the EU!" Activists see themselves not pitted against states or the UN machinery, but as experts and insiders on the topics discussed. As such, many of them feel they should be part of the actual negotiations. Despite their factual and

experiential insider knowledge, institutional processes place them physically and

symbolically outside the actual negotiations.

Access to negotiations. "What some NGOs don't get is that this is an

intergovernmental process and thus it is naturally closed to NGOs – NGOs are not

governments!" said a UN Women representative in an informal field conversation, and

some activists would agree. A CSW bureau member who served as facilitator of CSW

negotiations in the past also explains the line between what in the graphic is the core ring

of the CSW "(governments) and the outside location which women activists intentionally

seek to transgress.

> And what is funny, today I went to a briefing - being a member of the
> Bureau you are required also to brief NGOs about the process. It was
> interesting, because it is also a game where each of us play a role, so
> the NGOs were pretty aggressive and demanding. It was said 'it is a
> shame we can't participate in the agreed conclusions, I don't understand
> why, and it is against the UN charter, and we have ECOSOC
> status!'....Then I explained that like in all other negotiations it is still an
> intergovernmental process where you have delegates from governments
> sitting around a table and agreeing…Inputs from NGOs are there, as
> they can informally approach delegates and UN Women. But they
> cannot contribute officially to a document that is made by 'member
> states.'
>
> (I7, CSW bureau member, diplomat)

Here, a male CSW bureau member makes a direct reference to the "game" that is played,

and the roles each of the two (assumed) sides are playing, again reminiscent of the

dramaturgical model. Most member states are open to NGO monitoring, yet opposition

from some delegations leads the facilitator repeatedly to ask NGOs to leave the room.

Some activists try to sit in the meetings anyway and typically in the morning briefings it

is shared who was successful in not getting thrown out of the room. Some NGO

representatives have grown more acquainted with delegates over the years of their CSW

work and do not engage in this intentional trespassing, as to not "spoil my good

relationships" as Nicole, a seasoned activist from a large faith community shared (FN

030111). Ironically, sitting inside the negotiations may mark a participant as an outsider,

as a stranger, and a newcomer in the CSW-game. Being able to stay outside the

negotiations may take on the meaning of being more inside in terms of finding other,

more intimate, ways to communicate to delegates and to keep up the appearance of a

respectful "partner" rather than an opponent. This represents the shifting and sometimes

parallel nature of insiderness and outsiderness (Naples 1996).

    Access to technology. In lieu of unhindered access to buildings, the NGO

CSW/NY representatives of UN Women advertise the webcasts of events. The lack of

access to basic information regarding scheduling of events and meetings seems to baffle

NGOs since "technology is supposed to make the sharing of information easier, not

impossible!" as one activists angrily stated at a caucus meeting. Many women do not

have access to internet and email on site. In a morning briefing an agitated middle aged

woman got overwhelming applause when she said that "the praised internet based

solutions are not accessible by many rural women present who do not possess

smartphones! That doesn't make sense!" I noted in my fieldnotes that the NGO

CSW/NYC facilitator of the briefing cut this woman off. The facilitator did not provide

an answer and intentionally or unintentionally changed the topic by saying "It is my first

time of NGO CSW president; we have had amazing opportunity to interact with

UNWomen!" (FN 022912). When Carla, a seasoned UN activist reflects back on the

"good old days" of the CSW, she gets sentimental as women activists did not always have

to deal with problems like this:

> We used to have our NGO meetings at the UN, we had a big
> conference room where we had the morning briefings and everybody
> could be in the same room. Statements were always distributed
> through hard copy. Now the only way you can get them is through
> the web. And then we also had used that room for caucuses and any
> caucus meet there at a certain time and then at the end of the day we
> bring everybody together and all the caucuses show their
> information. We talk about how to influence the document and
> language proposals would circulate and we also had a copier. It was
> free for our use. You had to bring your own paper, but the copier was
> free for your use
>
> (I9, CSW activist 20+ years, October 15 2010).

Even though some activists would probably say that some fellow NGO members tend to

romanticize the past, Carla's quote shows that access — to technology, to buildings, and

to negotiations — intersects with the eventual production of the outcome document. It is

evident that activists from NGOs and faith communities who have branches in New York

City who can build continuous relationships to country delegates and UN staff, or

activists that are at the CSW in double roles within their country delegations have an

advantage in terms of access to resources and thus in their ability to influence the

proceedings.

Outsiders inside

A key question in multicultural and postcolonial feminism is who speaks for whom and whose voices are heard in regard to issues of women of the South (Naples 2009). The lack of acknowledgement of voices from women from the South remains a problem, as does the failure of Northern women to deconstruct their privilege in the context of a world system dominated by the North (Chowdhury 2006, Mohanty 2003, Spivak 1988). Class and geopolitical differences among CSW activists structure access and accessibility. Diversity and inequality along the axes of class, race, language, and political orientation among CSW activists substantiate the fact that "global feminism" is neither one monolithic block, nor that a woman's perspective necessarily constitutes a feminist standpoint.

"There is no other place where women can convene like this" said the Egyptian activist sitting next to me at the anti-poverty event of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (FN 022311). More than 140 people have gathered to learn from Gladys' and Maria's daily anti-poverty work in South Africa. Despite their joy in being able to visit the US for the first time, they regretfully informed the audience that their colleagues were unable to join them. The Tzu Chi Foundation managed to bring in some activists from the ground; this is not the case for many parallel events. I observed that due to funding issues the parallel events at the CSW may come across as elitist when white middle class managers of NGO Headquarters in the US or Europe are presenting the work done in the Philippines or Sub Saharan Africa. The ones who do the work cannot afford the flight and accommodation in NYC," I noted in my research diary that evening. "The CSW is too

expensive. The NGO CSW consultation day and reception alone cost $165.00. I can't go to either this year" says even a feminist sociologist who works in the US and has been coming to CSW for more than 10 years. She lives in the NYC area and has an advantage over women who have to travel and locate accommodations in one of the most expensive cities in the US. Despite increasing overall participation, class is reflected in persistent participation gaps across regions.

The CSW stands out among other commissions because of its particularly high participation of civil society actors in the form of NGOs, namely women's organizations of diverse geographical, ideological, and religious backgrounds. In 2012 2,054 representatives from 434 civil society organizations organized and attended more than 300 parallel events outside of the United Nations and 70 side events on the United Nations premises (Bachelet 2012). Participation statistics (DESA NGO 2013a) hide the stories of women who cannot come to CSW meetings. These are, for example, women from the Chechen Republic at CSW56 who could not enter the US for visa reasons but are blogging from afar, or women from Iran who were detained for participating at CSW 55 and chose not to come for the sake of their corporal safety the year after that (National Council of Women of Canada 2012). The following quote from Gail, who has worked with the CSW for 30 years as a full time activist, illustrates frustration with the NGO CSW as moderator of access to the meetings:

> Now they [UN] are involving the chairs of the NGO committees in Geneva and Vienna, which is good, but they don't have any contact with those in the South. Who are they consulting from the Africa region, from the Arab region? How are they going to work to try to bring in more NGO representatives from Latin America, which has always been a difficulty? Those women really need to be represented because they are historically the strength of the women's movement,

those women from Latin America. These women are really amazing women. They are at least as strong as the African women, and the African women are becoming more and more the base of the CSW.

(I9, CSW activist 20+ years, October 15 2010).

Her quote point to class and geopolitical differences, and how they may regulate access.

Naples (1996) often left the field asking "who are the insiders here?" She states that she

has yet to meet a community member who felt like "the mythical community insider"

(p.143). In her sample those with power and resources felt like outsiders because of their

wealth. I had different experiences as I met women who take pride in calling themselves

"UN – insiders" and enjoy their privileged access to the UN as activists. They are often

retired UN staff members who then associate with NGOs, or founded their own NGOs.

Or they are women, like Gail, who can afford to be full time activists in their own right.

Gail explains how she became an activist:

> I: So how did you get into this whole UN business?
> I9: I've been working for a non-profit in London and my husband got relocated back to the States. When I arrived here they asked me if I would represent them as a volunteer. So I sit there thinking that is going to be about three or four days a week. I got so interested in it I really handled it like a job and I was here [at the UN Headquarters] every day. I quit my regular job so that I could do this. I think I went about the first three to five years almost every day and was very well known by the UN and even by security…I would come in and go to all the different types of meetings just to learn things so it's just like another college degree really…I already have two masters degrees so I don't need another college degree but this was really, you know, just so interesting…so you're constantly meeting with people from UNC and UN and sending out your business cards corresponding and it really was like a full time job.

(I9, CSW activist 20+ years, October 15 2010).

Unlike many other NGO activists who lack funding to participate (Desai 2007b), Gail had the privilege to quit her job and focus on her UN work. Her experience substantiates the steep learning curve when getting involved in processes of global governance. Besides differently colored badges, this process requires a new vocabulary and fluency in one of the UN languages, prominently English. Every year I observed women whispering translations of spoken words for other women during events. I also documented incidents where women were not able to obtain translation in their native language and remained on the outside, not only of intergovernmental negotiations but also of parallel events. In 2012, rural women "are being paraded by some huge NGOs" as one European first year - activist critically remarked, "but no-one can hear their voice because other activists do not speak their language" (FN 030812). Literature confirms that a NGO establishment has been built over the years that leaves out those women who are most marginalized.

The activists present at the CSW do not necessarily embody the same characteristics as many of the women they represent. They often come from a higher class position and have not been elected by their constituency or those they represent, but are self-made activists (Ferree 2006, Yuval-Davis 2006, Desai 2007b). An activist from Lithuania was agitated after a morning briefing and said: "The NGO CSW seems to me like an uppity women's club, honestly. I don't feel they help us access the CSW; in fact this morning they clearly said they don't want us to talk to UN Women staff! "She vented her disapproval of the NGO CSW that functions as a mediator to the UN system. The NGO CSW's function is to facilitate participation of NGO's and to train activists in what Eastwood (Eastwood 2006) calls intentional institutional capture. It

provides education about UN processes and participatory mechanism in order to help translate activists their interests into forms than can be deciphered by the UN.

A consistent observation during my research was that interests clash in a strangely peaceful and calm way. For instance events calling for reproductive rights and universal sex education are taking place in the Church Center that may be flooded by anti-abortion and contraception-critical DVD material at any given day. The notion of a rigid dichotomy between (gender-conservative) state and (gender-progressive) NGO activists may be flipped, as exemplified in the briefing for civil society held by the US government in the extensive rooms of the US mission on 1st Street, NYC at the CSW 56. While in an EU briefing NGO representatives were invited to sit around a round conference table, the approximately 150 individuals who came to hear the US delegates explain their positions are organized similar to a lecture hall, with a panel of delegates on the podium upfront. The US delegates have taken a progressive stand this year and wanted to anchor reproductive rights for rural women into the outcome document. Against many expectations, NGO activists challenged the government representatives asking them to advocate parents' rights rather than reproductive rights and sex education. Activists represent a range of different feminisms and may sometimes not advocate for women's self determination. In this case the US government took a more liberal stance and did not embrace the input of a vocal majority of NGOs in its further negotiations. It is an ironic example on how the disregard of NGOs may contribute to more progressive language in the outcome document.

Last, there are women who work for both, government and NGOs, and get incorporated into the hierarchy, which can be interpreted as a cooptation strategy of powerful state actors. One might argue that the political establishment purposely shifts insider/outsider boundaries to domesticate feminist activists. Marsha, the seasoned CSW activist is critical towards the double role of some NGO delegates whose travels are paid by governments, or in the case of one of the country delegates I interviewed, who attend the CSW in the role of a government delegate. "You get the funding but basically you are muzzled" (FN 011813). It is also Marsha who taught me one of the greatest lessons of a global feminist movement when she said: "I actually don't care who you are, how much money you have, what religion or politics you may represent. What I care about here at the CSW is if you share the information you have got with other women activists. I have seen conservative, rich, white women handing out draft conclusions and share, and I have seen others absorbing, never say a word and running back to use what they learned for their institutions only." The essence of Marsha's quote is that boundaries of class, age, religion, nationality, and color of skin in the global women's movement may be erased out by feminist solidarity and to share the goal of global gender equality and the most important currency in a diplomatic process: information.

Who is the insider/outsider? – An attempt in strong reflexivity

> "The purpose of research is not to validate a Truth, but to enable different forms of knowledge to challenge power. Multiple truths and diverse knowledges become the actual product of research when the subjectivity, location, and humanness of the knower are included"

> (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007:498)

Since I started this research project I have been keeping a working document which I revised periodically titled "subjectivity statement" (as suggested by Peshkin 1988) as a way to generate reflexivity. Reflexivity is a holistic process that takes place along all stages of the research process. It is a process of self-critical reflection, which bears new forms of knowledge and contributes to "strong objectivity" (Harding 2007) through acknowledging one's own subjectivity and partial truth-claims. Reflexivity is, can, and should be uncomfortable (Pillow 2003), and is a communal process that fosters sharing and participatory knowledge building practices, hence producing more ethical, socially relevant research (Hesse-Biber and Piatelli 2007). Reflexivity also has implications for the writing up of research. Rather than playing out "the God trick" (Haraway 1988) of the almighty, "objective" voice from the background, it requires the expulsion of a "scientific voice" that obscures reality and discounts emotion (Sprague 2005). Excerpts of an early subjectivity statement serve as a starting point for the reflection of my shifting insider/outsider status in this research project:

In a way it is not surprising that I am studying the making of gender equality policy. I have been interested in the advancement of women since age 13, when I drew a three-foot sized symbol for women on the wall paper in my room with the words "Be free, be woman!" which in German is a rhyme ("Sei froh, sei Frau"). During the 1990's, starting at age 15, I have been dedicating most of my spare time to volunteering in grassroots' women's organizations and continued to work as a social worker in feminist contexts. I started to study sociology because I wanted see beyond the social problems which were daily currency in my paid work…Later I was elected for the position of the "independent women representative" of my hometown. This was a big shift in my career, here I was dealing with politicians, sitting in a city council office, and grappling with my low self-esteem which often left me feeling inferior on the inside…In this light the choice of my dissertation topic seems like a logic next step after I dealt with local politics, just as sociology seemed to be a logic next step after dealing with individual social problems…Yet, I am intimidated by the vastness of the global context. In the beginning I felt like a little worm being a researcher, even being an intern, someone the UN partly relies on, how might a woman feel that is less educated and doesn't speak fluent English? It is further argued in feminist (standpoint) epistemology that embodied experiences from the subordinated position can produce a particular knowledge that can challenge and transform power/knowledge. So my feeling subordinate might be a source of inspiration and a valuable perspective.

(Subjectivity Statement of author, Oct 2011)

When I wrote this in 2011, I had not read Naples (1996) on insiderness/outsiderness yet, which later gave me a way to think about what I felt and experienced. Naples (1996) extensively reflects on her own standpoint as an urban woman who moved to rural Iowa, where she started studying marginalized communities of Latina, Mexican, and Mexican American women. She felt very much like an outsider when she entered the rural setting, but her own feelings of outsiderness became a resource through which she was able to acquire an insider's perspective on many residents' perceptions of alienation (their outsiderness). This is very similar to how I felt

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at the CSW. As a Non-American woman coming from the Austrian countryside I may be better able to understand the difficulties of access and the lack of transparency of processes for other activists from nonurban communities outside of the U.S.. The themes that emerged from my data are not a coincidence, and my particular social location guides my interest and perception and thus shapes my research (Reay 1996, McCorkel and Myers 2003). Hill Collins (1986) has made the argument that intellectuals can enrich and strengthen their disciplines by learning to "trust their own personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge" (p. 29). Addressing the question of how to use location or position as a source of knowledge, she identifies a (Afro-American woman) researcher's "outsider within" status as particularly informative.

Outsider – Access to delegates and diplomats. When I started my research I had drafted a letter on University letter head, which I now recognize as naiveté. I asked for an interview with diplomats working in their countries' mission-office in New York City. I initially sent 20 letters to a sample of countries representing different grades on a conceptual range of gender equality-progressiveness and conservativeness I had determined in advance. Weeks passed, and I did not get a single reply. I sent follow up e-mails, in some cases I attempted follow up phone calls. After 3 months I was left with one e-mail reply from a Northern country in Europe that extended "kind regards" with a one-liner that "the interview does not sound interesting to the mission at this time." Luckily, I was later able to utilize my main informant as reference. Subsequently she established contact to the country-delegates and diplomats. Along the lines of Edmonds-Cady (2012) my key informant was a linkage between me and more powerful participants that had implications for my insider/outsider status. On the one hand this contact got me

more inside so I was able to interview, but on the other hand the necessity of her

assistance is evidence of my outsider location. Country delegates, who are politicians or

political staff, as well as diplomats working full time in UN missions, are difficult to

interview. Diplomats have had extensive training and have learned to be diplomatic. This

means they are trained to keep people like me outside knowing, while giving the

impression to share information. In the quote below, I try to find out which countries are

most opposed to NGO monitoring during the informal negotiations from Marc, a

diplomat from an EU country who has experience as CSW bureau member. I have

already posed this question in different ways throughout the interview and this is my

fourth and last, most direct attempt:

> I: So which state actors do least condone NGO presence in the informals?
>
> Marc: There are sensitivities within the UN membership towards NGO participation.
>
> I: Who is most against it [NGO presence at CSW negotiations]?
>
> Marc: (Laughs), well...countries...countries, it is not difficult to understand which countries might be skeptical or more wary about NGO participation. I have to say as a member of the European Union we are very much in favor of NGOs in the process, at the same time there are rules and the rules clearly state that you know this is an intergovernmental process. So formally only states can participate and can be there, can negotiate the text, can propose demands. What I really want to stress is NGOs are really are much more [a] part of this process than they actually say, because it is true that through informal ways NGOs have access to the text that is negotiated, I really really think they have a say in this.
>
> (Interview 7, diplomat from EU country, March 6, 2012).

Marc avoids being concrete and changes the topic very quickly emphasizing the liberal

stance towards NGOs from his own region. He not only engages in participatory rhetoric

but also defines and constructs reality for NGOs by saying they are "more part of this

than they say." The setting of the interviews with diplomats and country representatives

also differ from other interviews I conducted. Marc meets with me because my main

informant has asked him to do so more than a week ago. Since then we exchanged emails

on a daily basis and have postponed interviews already twice. I meet Marc finally for a

total of 28 minutes in the UN cafeteria. He sent me a text message on my cell phone if I

have time right "now" as he can sneak out of a CSW roundtable.

Another country delegate who works for the family ministry of her home country

in Asia I meet days later in the UN cafeteria as well. She was on a short lunch break from

informal negotiations. After quickly purchasing a coffee to go, I found myself running

down the stairs after her with my small tape recorder in my hand, trying to catch her

words. I remember that I had trouble keeping up with her. We ended up having somewhat

of an interview standing behind the UN Headquarters, smoking. In my fieldnotes for this

day I note how this situation makes my outsider status so clear to me: I had to cater to my

research participants, I had to make time spontaneously whenever wherever they were

able to meet me, I literally ran after them, just as activists who lobby their interests in the

corridors of power. In contrast, in some situations and with some individuals, I could

"turn on" an insider status based on my credentials as a former UN intern.

Insider – access to UN staff and data. My insider status as an intern yielded

advantage in terms of accessibility of background information, informants, and interview

participants. In fact, I could not have conducted this study without my main informant

who was a supervisor during my internship. The UN is a bureaucratic institution and as such highly hierarchical. As an intern I tried to interview some of my colleagues which proved difficult. Several UN staff members refused to talk to me in spite of actual or perceived permission to do so, yet UN staff members were easier to access than country delegates. When analyzing the interview data I realized that the length of professional socialization in the UN determines the degree of information I could obtain. Put simply, the longer participants are on the job the more diplomatic they get in their verbal expression. It happened twice that I had to stop the taping process with UN staff informants because they were only willing to share "off the record." Some interviewees did not want to be taped at all. As a former intern and thus former colleague the rapport with younger staff members was easier to establish, particularly those I share embodied characteristics with. Lyda and I shared the same age, same race and culture, and a similar feminist approach. During my internship in 2010 we had briefly worked together on an expert meeting as preparation for CSW 55. When I interviewed her two years later in 2012, she still referred to me as "one of us," as an insider, as a colleague and shared her opinion about the CSW frankly:

> I 5: Whatever. I mean I think the agreed conclusions are useless, I mean it really seems one of these chickens, you know, without a head that just keeps on running (laugh). And I mean I know I am saying all that because it's you and that's another person of the UN and obviously when I speak to students or speak to people I say different things.

> (Interview 5, UN staff, <5years experience, February 26 2012)

Even though the quote renders the outcome document "useless," which is true in terms of its legal binding force, Lyda had already prepared two CSW meetings at the time of the interview and was enthusiastic about her work. I have observed her working 80-100 hours weeks (no overtime paid), in order to write a "better CSW report this year, one people can really use." I saw her edit the scholarly expert papers that are distributed to delegates and activists in advance on Sundays, and I have heard her talk about the symbolic power of the meeting and the agreed conclusions. Like me and thousands of other activists, UN staff members, and progressive country actors, she shares the sincere belief that conservative actors can be educated through CSW meetings and their side events and that it is essential for the UN to continue to give resources, thought, action, and an annual platform to global gender (in)equalities.

Conclusion

My data tell an interesting story about power and the production of global equality policy. For women activists the CSW creates opportunities to connect with delegates of their home and other countries and get their voices heard directly at the meetings and in briefings. Many of these women remain silenced in their home countries (Zettler 2009). The CSW creates networking opportunities amongst women and provides some space for NGOs to influence language of written normative statements such as the Agreed Conclusions and other resolutions which reflect the dynamic change of gender equality language on an annual basis and eventually develop international norms. These

NGO's – despite or even because of their diversity – constitute a global women's movement that has emerged over the last decades in the context of the UN. This movement has successfully transgressed the insider/outsider binary but faces challenges of access and accessibility.

Women's voices are incorporated but also muted at CSW negotiations. Building on Naples' (1996) concept of shifting insiderness and outsiderness, I find that many women activists at the CSW perceive themselves as *insiders outside*, as they are experts, subjects, "insiders" in relation to the topics discussed yet struggle with fully accessing the intergovernmental process of the CSW. Utilizing standpoint theory our theories about feminist civil society can grow more complex: It is neither the case that actors of the global women's movement are not pitted against the UN as powerless and invisible grassroots initiatives, nor do they have full acknowledgement and full access to the negotiation table as equal partners. Even if some global women activists would not want to be equal partners and honor their watchdog position, much has to be done from the UN system side to reduce friction and increase accessibility at CSW meetings for global feminist civil society.

Some women activists remain *outsiders inside* the heterogeneous group of activists within the global women's movement. I agree with many scholars that women activists have substantially shaped the global agenda and a transnational women's movement remains a vital platform for social change (Jain 2005, Antrobus 2004, Meyer and Prügl 1999). My data speak to the fact that assumed alliances based on gender often fail to produce collective emancipation (Hill Collins 1986; Mohanty 1991). It is not enough simply to recognize difference; we must be fully cognizant of how difference is

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integrally related to the distribution of power in a society and within feminist organizations (Yuval-Davis 2006, McCorkel and Myers 2003). Along these lines (some) CSW activists foster genuine solidarity necessary for revolutionary change, while others pursue self-interests and do not confront organizational structures that reify and reproduce unequal relationships (such as unequal access to the meetings). A follow up study on the fourth, invisible, ring of the graphic above - women who cannot come to CSW meetings or who might have stopped coming - will be illuminating to this theme of differences within the global women's movement. Also, further research should elaborate on how neoliberal and fundamentalist actors and forces that are interested in a conservative reading of gender relations may purposely shift insider and outsider boundaries by coopting feminist and progressive actors into their organizations.

My research is a "messy example" just as Pillow (2008) advocates, as I can neither present a "success in failure" nor a "failure in success" research story line. What I do present is an illustration of Naples' (1996) concept of shifting insider and outsider positionality that I utilized for my research participants as well as for myself as a researcher, former intern, and activist. My positionalities as well as my results are not clean shaven, they do not neatly fit in the boxes in which I would like them to fit. Each aspect of my particular location has opened some, and at the same time closed other doors of data collection and theorizing. Insider/Outsider. I remain both/and, not either/or.[15]

CHAPTER IV

'THE PERFECT BLEND' - SOCIOLOGISTS FOR WOMEN IN SOCIETY'S GLOBAL

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Abstract

The United Nations (UN) continues to provide a stage for a diverse global women's movement and the production of global gender equality norms that, if utilized, advance gender equality in its member states. This paper focuses on how members of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) have influenced the process of policy construction in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of the UN. I focus on themes that emerged from data collected through in-depth interviews with current or former UN scholar-activists who are members of SWS, and present experiences and challenges of SWS-members' engagement with UN politics and policy development since the mid 1990s. I demonstrate that SWS does justice to its mission as an activist organization through its work in the global arena. Based on interviews, observations, and archival material I trace the beginning of SWS' engagement with the CSW, and present benefits and challenges of this transnational activist work.

Data demonstrate that SWS's UN scholar-activism is increasing the visibility and applicability of feminist sociology in the realm of global governance. Feminist sociology critically examines but also disrupts hegemonic discourse, and offers opportunities for concrete social change. Within SWS this is accomplished through proactive participation in UN processes and activism, mentoring of junior UN delegates, and teaching sociology.

Introduction

> ″And what does it mean that SWS is an NGO? I mean it's our activist role. We talk all the time how do we blend the academy with activism, well there it is, the UN. That to me is the perfect blend. We are using our research knowledge, our academic background to promote women's equality…We don't only have the potential of having an impact on an issue in the US; we have the potential of having an impact on an issue worldwide. ″
>
> Former UN delegate for SWS

This quote of a former UN delegate for SWS exemplifies the central thesis of this paper. Building on the work of Feltey and Rushing (1998) who conceptualized SWS as an arena for social change, my goal is to show that SWS continues, and has expanded, its activist mission through its contributions to transnational feminist scholar-activism. Comprising 193 member states, the UN plays a crucial role for the advancement of global gender equality. Particularly in the last four decades the UN has created important physical and virtual space for the evolution of a ″global gender equality regime″ (Kardam

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2004) that blossomed around the UN Women World Conferences held since 1975 (Desai 2009, Jain 2005, Desai 2005b, United Nations 2000). Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) as a non-profit organization of feminist sociologists, ″dedicated to maximizing the effectiveness of and professional opportunities for women in sociology…and improving women's lives and creating feminist social change″ (SWS 2013) has taken and co-created space in this global gender equality regime. Transnational research and activism of SWS-members is widespread and varied, here I focus on SWS' work in the context of the UN's CSW, and in particular its role as Non Governmental Organization (NGO) with Special Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). I am examining the contents, benefits, and challenges of SWS' UN delegates work at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This examination also involves questions about how SWS became involved in the CSW, and what future visions scholar-activists may hold. This article attempts to address the lack of research on SWS' work at the UN that is reflected to date only in oral histories and SWS Network News reports, both of which I included in the data set for this project. Before I turn to methods and findings, I first conceptualize SWS as part of a global women's movement and clarify concepts of global and transnational feminism.

SWS was founded in 1970 after more than 200 women met in a women's caucus at the American Sociological Association (ASA) meeting in 1969 (Roby 2009). The founding meeting in Washington 1970 was the ″prototype for a chain of friendships and an ever-widening network linking members of Sociologists for Women in Society″ that offered each other ″speaking engagements, consultation on writing and research projects, houseroom, consolation in hard times (when tenure wasn't granted or when there were

family misfortunes) and rejoicing in triumphs″ (Kaplan-Daniels 1994: 38f.). The name

reflects that sociologists of all genders can join and the organization is not self focused

but concerned with women in all of society (SWS 2013, Feltey and Rushing 1998). SWS

has influenced both the organizational governance structures of sociology (such as the

ASA), as well as made substantive change in the production of sociological scholarship

(Feltey and Rushing 1998). In 1987 SWS founded a journal—*Gender & Society*—which

ranked in the top four in 2010 and in 2013, the top 10, and is the top-ranked journal

globally in gender studies (Martin 2013).

SWS maintains a social action committee and understands itself as activist

feminist organization that is committed to social change *for* women in society. Its

members (of which about 3% are male, Martin 2013) have contributed to campaigns and

protest marches. They also have founded non-profit organizations, and served on boards

of activist organizations (Risman 2006, Feltey and Rushing 1998). SWS facilitates

activism through a mailing list, training members to work with media, providing access

to current research, e.g. fact sheets, and networking with other organizations and

promoting members as experts in their research areas (Feltey and Rushing 1998). Many

SWS members engage in public sociology, so much so that ″talking to SWS about public

sociology is like bringing coal to Newcastle″ (Burawoy 2002:1). SWS members are not

only active as public sociologists in the US despite institutional barriers (Sprague and

Laube 2009) but have moved into the international and global realm as an arena of social

change and activism. SWS had a presence in the series of UN world conferences, the

Women's Worlds Conferences, the World Social Forum, and many other outlets of a

transnational and global women's movement as documented in SWS-members' scholarly work and *Network News* articles over the years.

In order to conceptualize SWS as actor that is part of a *global,* as well as *transnational* women's movement it is necessary to clarify and differentiate the terms that are often used interchangeably in the literature. For the last two centuries women have organized themselves in networks beyond the nation-state and have forged international and transnational ties (Hawkesworth 2012, Rupp 1997). In the 20th century the UN has been an unlikely ″godmother″ (Snyder 2006) of a ″global women's movement″ (Antrobus 2004) that usually refers to women's mobilizations of the past four decades around the UN's International Women's Decade from 1975-1985 and the series of UN world conferences in the 1990s around human rights, the environment, population, and social development among others. Yet the term is problematic and highly contested (Desai 2007b, Grewal 1998). Feminists have criticized the notion of a ″global women's movement″ because women's voices are lumped together and sold as an artificial unified voice (Bergeron 2001; Naples and Desai 2002; Ferree and Tripp 2006), and a flawed dichotomy of local/global is substantiated (Patil 2011). Initially the notion of ″global feminism″ was critical of the earlier notion of ″global sisterhood″ and its uncritical attachment to commonalities of women's oppression around the world (Mohanty 2003, Mohanty et al. 1991). Furthermore, in addition to gender, we need to simultaneously undo race and nation, and interrogate not only international but also intra-national (within the U.S.) hierarchies to forge global gender equality (Chowdhury 2006). Walby (2011: 6) acknowledges that ″global feminism″ can make invisible important distinctions and may elevate practices of those in hegemonic countries. Yet Walby (2011) makes the point that

the UN is a global phenomenon, she thus uses ″global feminism″ when, and only when she talks about organizations that utilize the UN or one of its bodies as context for activism. Along these lines SWS is indeed part of a global women's movement as its activism focuses on the CSW which is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women within the UN system.

In response to global feminisms, critical transnational feminist perspectives emerged in the 1990's (Patil 2011). Transnational feminist perspectives question a northern ″missionary liberal feminism″ (Hawkesworth 2006) and address issues of imperialism, colonialism, and development. Transnational feminist perspectives have successfully questioned the constructions of Southern women as ″the other″ and elaborated on neo-colonial legacies and politico-economic inequalities, as well as expanded the scope of activism to include Northern issues such as military actions since 9/11, the war on drugs, and ″human rights in our own backyard″ (Armaline, Glasberg and Purkayastha 2011) instead of pointing fingers to developing countries. Patil (2011) identifies two canonical texts (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, Grewal and Kaplan 1994) and three key positions with/in sociology in response to this literature: 1) moving beyond dichotomies of local versus global bringing together gender and sexuality within post-colonial nationalism and state-building projects (Kim-Puri 2005); 2) emphasis on women's agency and transnational organizing building particularly via international organizations (Desai 2009, Naples and Desai 2002); 3) a focus on transnational networks and opportunity structures (Ferree 2006, Moghadam 2005).

One important moment of the emergence of transnational feminist perspectives in sociology was the 2005 Gender & Society special issue on examining state and nation

from a transnational feminist perspective. In the introduction, Kim-Puri (2005: 143) outlines four parameters of a transnational feminist perspective as an interdisciplinary theoretical and political lens: 1) a bridging of the material and the discursive to understand how unequal distribution of social and economic resources is (re)produced through cultural representations and discourses; 2) an approach that highlights the importance of social structures and the state as a messy, powerful site of symbolic and cultural production that is racialized, sexualized and gendered rather than a unified and coherent structure; 3) a shift from nation-to-nation comparisons, indices, and scales, to establishing linkages and focusing on unequal interconnections that exist across cultural settings; and 4) an emphasis on empirical research, particularly an integration of more methodologies than the predominant textual analysis. SWS members were critical in developing and applying a transnational feminist lens in their scholarly work as well as their activism. They are thus not only part of the global feminist movement around the UN but are co-creators of a critical transnational feminist space.

In its UN-work, SWS focuses on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) The CSW fostered its place in the UN system through the four World Women's Conferences (Reanda 1999, Winslow 1995). Its members convene annually in at the UN Headquarters in New York for 10 working days of negotiations in late February, early March. CSW meetings involve delegates of member states of the UN, representatives of the UN-system, invited academic experts, and grassroots organizations which hold ″parallel events″ during the CSW meeting and make use of the convention to lobby delegates. Since 1996 the outcome of the annual meetings is a document called ″Agreed Conclusions″ on one or more priority themes that constitutes policy guidelines for all

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member states that are crafted in formal and informal meetings (For a detailed history of the CSW, see United Nations and Boutros-Ghali 1996 and United Nations 2006). Over the course of several years I observed closely the formal and informal processes of the CSW that has become my main research site. In the following I outline my methods of research, give more detail about the CSW, my research site, and describe the data for this paper.

Methods

Data for this paper derive from 700 hours of ethnographic participant observation in the rooms of the UN headquarters in New York City/NY, using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2006) as analytical strategy. Much of these data were collected during a two month internship in the Fall of 2010 in the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). After my internship I accessed the field site through an annual UN ground-pass in my capacity as UN delegate and member of the International Committee of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS). In this capacity I observed the CSW 53 meeting in 2009, the CSW 55 meeting in 2011, and the CSW 56 meeting in 2012. In addition I recorded, transcribed and analyzed 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with UN staff members involved in the organizational logistics of the CSW, diplomats, country delegates, and global gender activists working in and around the CSW with an average length of one hour.

In this paper I focus on the themes that emerged from eleven in depth interviews I conducted with former and current SWS-members who are, or have been, instrumental in SWS' work at the UN. I started interviewing SWS delegates I worked with in my capacity as elected UN delegate. I used snowball sampling, and asked interview partners for names of former UN delegates, or UN activists, that were influential in the history of SWS. Based on these recommendations I kept a list of names which I called ″the founding mothers' shortlist.″ My sampling frame consisted of the 18 names recommended over the course of interviews. Of these 18, I was able to speak in depth with eleven women; two women are deceased, and two declined to be interviewed. I excluded one further individual because they did not fit the sample criteria (current or former member of SWS and/or UN delegate and/or instrumental for UN-work of SWS), and two never responded to my repeated interview invitations using different contact information.

The participants were asked about their experience with UN-work for SWS, their pathways to the UN as well as to SWS, and future visions they hold for SWS' role on the global parquet. Two of the participants were instrumental in the process of obtaining consultative status for SWS in the late 1990s. Eight of the SWS members have at some point been elected as UN representatives for SWS and have been active as such at least 2 years in the time span from 2000 to 2012, in the remainder of this paper called ″UN delegates.″ Four of the participants have been active in global feminist contexts beyond the UN, such as Women's World Conference or World Social Forum. I supplemented interview data with systematic content analysis of SWS *Network News* articles[16] as well

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[16] Online on the SWS website since 2004, earlier relevant issues were kindly provided by Judith Lorber.

as meeting minutes, documents, and letters that were forwarded to me by the SWS Executive Office and other SWS members.

I set out with the goal to write a ″herstory″ of SWS' UN-work and honor the ″founding mothers″ and activists over the years that have advanced SWS' activism in the global realm. Over the course of data collection it became clear to me that honoring those who happened to be available to be interviewed for my project means excluding those who for known (death, health problems, separation from SWS, retirement) or unknown reasons could or would not participate in the project. Some participants were uncomfortable with possible accounts of their role, exemplified in the quote ″Don't give me too much credit, colleagues will be upset″ (I18). As sociologists we also know that whenever we mention certain names or phenomena, we make a conscious or unconscious decision to omit others. I agree with the participant who said ″what's really amazing about the SWS and the international committee itself is that it isn't just a few names, most of the people involved participate in that nurturing culture and if you don't come in with it you learn it″ (I10). I have thus decided to focus on patterns, not persons in this paper. Moreover, I guaranteed confidentiality to my participants in accordance with IRB guidelines and conditions for approval of this project. Therefore, participants are only identified by the coding numbers used in the analysis. I use names in historical contexts when they appeared in a minimum of three different transcripts which indicated to me that the scholar-activists are inter-subjectively established as leaders in a certain historical role.

The beginnings of SWS' UN-activism

By the mid 1990's international work had begun to take place within SWS on an informal basis. Some SWS members had been working with the UN and attended World Women Conferences. They functioned as representatives of other organizations, and even as SWS representatives, within the venue of the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) by 1997/98.[17] The history of SWS' involvement at the United Nations is interwoven with the New York Chapter of SWS, a vibrant community of at times up to 25 women that came from around New York to monthly meetings (Wartenberg 1995). The chapter disbanded around 2006 because members were getting ″tired and retired″ (I18).

The 4th Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995 sparked a wave of professionalization within SWS' international work. Several SWS members represented SWS at the Huairou Forum adjacent to the formal UN conference in Beijing (SWS 1995). Judith Lorber organized SWS side events, and set up the International Committee of SWS as an Ad Hoc Committee in 1994 – against some resistance – to facilitate SWS' involvement with the Beijing Conference and to create a place and a process to organize SWS' presence on the global parquet. She saw the need to formalize insular activisms of

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[17] The DPI's function is to promote global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the United Nations. Nowadays over 1,340 NGOs are associated with DPI, which briefs them on a regularly basis and supports their efforts to interact with the UN in their areas of expertise (DPI 2013).

SWS members in the international realm, and connect them with the national organization of SWS. The *Network News* reported that the newly established international committee "will take responsibility to assure that participants report back to the organization at Midyear and Annual Business Meetings and that information about forthcoming and past events appear in Network News" as well as "that the SWS representatives to the UN be mandated to speak and vote in caucuses but for written statements or formal oral statements, representatives must get approval of the membership at the semiannual meetings or of the executive officers if time does not allow waiting for the semiannual meetings" (SWS Network News 1994, P. 12). Members of the New York chapter were also instrumental in lifting SWS' status to the "highest status we can get" (Gordon in *Network News* 1996, xiii, 5: 7) within the UN.

In order for an organization to participate fully in CSW meetings it has to achieve "Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN" as a non-governmental organization (NGO). Eastwood (2006: 189) coined the term "intentional institutional capture" in her institutional ethnography on UN forest policies to denote processes by which practitioners translate their experiences and interests into something that is recognizable by the organization. SWS' intentional capture of the UN is expressed in the work of UN delegates who participate in meetings of the CSW, submit written statements, organize parallel events, lobby UN staff and country delegates, and network with other women's organizations and activists. Through achieving "ECOSOC status" SWS' experiences become recognizable to the United Nations. The consultative relationship with ECOSOC is governed by a resolution (ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31) which outlines the eligibility requirements for consultative status, rights and obligations

of NGOs. While all nongovernmental organizations dealing with social or economic matters in the spirit of the UN charter can apply for consultative status, application procedures are lengthy (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2012) and have been identified as a barrier to accessing the UN by UN analysts (Zettler 2009). Forty-one NGOs were granted consultative status by the council in 1946; by 1992 more that 700 NGOs had attained consultative status and the number has been steadily increasing ever since to 3,743 organizations as of February 1, 2013 (DESA NGO 2013). SWS was granted Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC in July 1999. As of 2013 two SWS members serve as representatives to the Department of Public Information and five serve as representatives to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and representatives to the annual meetings of the CSW, yet sometimes as many as 20 SWS members and their students attend the CSW meetings.

The New York chapter thus started to create an application for ECOSOC status. It was not unusual that members of the New York Chapter ″came dressed up to SWS meetings but never joined SWS″ (I18). One of these members was Ibtyhaj Arafat who had gotten involved in the New York Chapter of SWS through colleagues at CUNY where she was teaching in 1991/92. She never attended a national conference of SWS and never identified as SWS member but ″tried to be of help″ by writing much of the application because she had background, professional history, and experience with the UN. Diana Papademas agreed to serve as one of the first delegates in case approval came through, along with Judy Gordon and Jackie Skiles. The ″UN sub-committee″ within the international committee had many members over the years, but according to one participant, ″We did not have an agenda, each of these people came in, and then go back

and then sometimes write for the newsletter…there was not much thinking about what we as SWS can contribute, not in a systematic way (I13)." In recent years manuals and literature on SWS' UN have been created by its members to "increase the visibility within SWS of what the UN work was all about. We were on the committee and we didn't even know what it was about!"(I16).

The International Committee was divided into three subcommittees in 2002: one consisting of people who work with the UN, one consisting of scholars with the ISA in particular the research committee 32, and the third was the global feminist partnership program. It was in this period that UN activism underwent another surge of professionalization. The International Committee (IC) redefined the role of SWS in the UN, and introduced staggered 3-year terms for delegates, in order for more experienced delegates to mentor new members. Around that time the UN also required SWS to define a lead delegate. In 2005 the International Committee established a steering committee made up of the Chair of the International Committee, the 5 UN reps, and the two sub-committee chairs so that the business of the committee can continue in the absence of the chair or its other members (Desai 2005a), a practice that has been further developed (Kim 2012 , Karides 2009, Smith 2008a, Smith 2007). It wasn't until 2011 that the IC had more applicants to serve as UN delegates than positions to be filled, "but before that, it was trying to find if anyone was willing to do this" (I19). As SWS UN delegates have improved their internal communication in the *Network News* and their operating structures over the years, UN work has become more attractive to more SWS members. The interest is perspicuous considering the perceived benefits of UN work to which I will now turn.

Benefits of SWS' feminist scholar-activism at the UN

In the core of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) are the negotiations of the member states that take place mostly behind closed doors. Delegates from all countries negotiate paragraph by paragraph language for the Agreed Conclusions, the outcome document, focusing on one priority theme each year. The facilitator of the meetings can allow NGOs to observe this process, and SWS delegates have taken advantage of this opportunity to "learn how the UN works, comma by comma, period by period (I18)." I have elsewhere spelled out how a CSW meeting works and adapted a ring-model that emerged from the data and correlates to power (Jauk 2012).

SWS delegates perceived the "watchdog" position as rewarding, as well as the chance to open this learning opportunity to students. On this international stage the US may still hold hegemonic power but is required to play by the rules to the satisfaction of one delegate who remembers "sitting in on the language of the final resolutions and people very politely listening to the delegates from Syria or other countries… Iran, that ordinarily the United States doesn't want to talk to. But here respect and listening to the opinions of the women from all over world (I20)."

SWS fulfills its role at the UN through participation at the meetings and in recent years also through the submission of written statements, and the organization of parallel events which has increased the visibility of SWS at the UN, and marks a process of professionalization. Ideas about organizing a SWS parallel event had occurred recurrently from the time of application in 1998. The first SWS parallel event took place at the CSW on March 5th 2012. Manisha Desai, Shobha Hamal Gurung and Kristy Kelly shared their

research under the title "Feminist Sociological Insight on Literacy Projects, Community Grassroots Groups, and Rural Women's Leadership." It was enthusiastically attended as women were attracted by the use of the word "feminist" in the title of the session, a word not commonly in use at the CSW (Jauk et al. 2012). On Friday, March 15, 2013, the second parallel event of SWS took place with the title "Feminist Responses to Violence Against Women and Girls," featuring the speakers Manisha Desai, Kristy Kelly, Bandana Purkayastha, and Roberta Villalon.

In recent years impact and visibility of UN work increased through the documentation of processes through informal manuals that are passed along to new UN delegates and extensive reporting in the Network News. SWS' impact increased also through written statements to the CSW[18]. The written statement is a 1500 word document that can be submitted in advance and will be translated into the five UN languages. It was so far based on SWS scholarship and UN-reports (i.e. "agreed language"), and served as common denominator and basis for SWS' lobby-work in the different arenas of briefings, caucuses, and in interaction with country delegates and UN-system members. It is with actual communication work and lobbying that the written statement takes on form and potentially shapes the outcome document, as this delegate explains:

> "It was very satisfying to me, the year that the priority goal was women's education we had submitted a paper about education, and one of the things we noticed was missing from the draft document was there was no mention of poor women and girls and dealing with school fees which were preventing them from getting an education. And we wanted that language. I went to the US Mission Briefing and I had a separate slip of paper that we wanted inserted in that draft document and my mission at the mission ask one of our delegation to see if they could try to get that language

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[18] See appendix G for a complete list of statements.

into the document. I didn't get to ask the question at the briefing but at the end of briefing I went up to the delegate I told her I was from SWS and I gave her a copy of the paper and I talked to her about the language and I gave her that slip of paper. She said, ″I absolutely agree with you that language is missing, it needs to be in there.″ And when the document came out the language was there. And that to me it was so satisfying to feel like 'Wow, I had some role in doing that!' I am sure there is somewhere in the world, there is someone addressing the issue of school fees for women and girls to help them to get an education. It's very satisfying. It's like putting a drop in the pond and watching it ripple out. That to me is very satisfying. ″ (I16)

In fact SWS has indeed made an impact as paragraph "o" of the Agreed Conclusions of 2011 does encourage countries to provide free access to education if possible, as well as provide scholarships for girls (United Nations 2011). It is impossible to measure the impact of this particular paragraph on women's lives worldwide, but we can rightly assume that the Agreed Conclusions are guidelines for governments, and more so for UN funded projects and programs.

″Transformative,″ ″thrilling,″ ″exciting,″ ″inspiring,″ ″exhilarating″ are the words used to describe UN work in SWS narratives. It is personal inspiration, connecting with other women from around the globe, and the embodied experience of the learning that SWS UN delegates mention most often in their narratives as payoffs of their work. Some see synergies between the UN and SWS that coincide with goals and methods of feminist scholar-activists: ″Maybe [it is] because we're academic but there's an attraction to institutionalized forums like this (I19),″ one scholar-activist speculates why the bureaucratic mire of the UN evokes positive emotions. The UN context as symbolic to overcome social, cultural, and geographical boundaries and the embodied experience of collective action was stressed in other narratives: ″…sociology is about collective action, it was just wonderful to see it in action, to see people able across language barriers, and

geography and all the differences that we have actually come together. There is an

euphoria about that prospect that the UN always seem to inspire (I17)."

Making connections with other women was by far the benefit most emphasized by

SWS delegates. "I saw women from different countries asking each other for advice.

Women gladly translated for other women. Women helped other women in wheelchairs

navigate the cramped quarters. Witnessing these acts of kindness gives me faith that

gender equity can be advanced around the world when we work together"(Skiles 2005).

The connections made with women are also shared with students so the CSW

participation has impact not only impact on personal research (I15) but also on the quality

and opportunities in teaching:

> "I have made some connections…I've met some of the women from some of the
> African NGOs are just remarkable...I have gone to some of the side events and
> just really had a great experience...I connected some of my students with some of
> these NGOs because part of their project was to find an NGO that was working on
> an issue that they had identified for the country they were studying. I was able to
> connect them directly with the people in the organization. " (I16)

The scholar-activism of SWS' UN work may offer particular benefits for graduate

students. Several graduate students, myself included, have so far used SWS as

springboard for their field research at the UN and so utilized SWS' global activism for

their dissertation research (Smith 2008b, Cicneros forthcoming). They can benefit from

intergenerational mentoring, and connect with seasoned scholars on the service work

level and through common activism.

> "I like little distractions here and there and personally given what SWS in the way
> in which you can network through these other ways in terms of being a scholar
> and being a graduate student, like obviously publications don't come out
> extraordinarily often, so this is a way for someone to make their name
> recognizable, at the early stages of research, without having to publish books
> every year. So that's been helpful for me in that way." (I15)

Early delegates were ″self taught global activists″ (I10) and ″made the road by walking ″ (I18), later generations benefitted from intergenerational mentoring. ″I think because I am one of the first UN reps, I think we were all learning together. Most of my colleagues were senior, …but in terms of work with the UN we were all kinda learning together″ (I15). In recent years, reports in *Network News articles* are more available, and a working document with the title ″Lessons Learned″ was passed on to newer delegates and explained the CSW in nontechnical language, as well as how to get around. One delegate explains her initial reactions and her experience of mentoring within SWS:

> ″I just remember feeling so overwhelmed and so scared like I should turn around and run …There was this sharing of knowledge and I feel that it is really important that they don't make you feel stupid, when you ask questions and that they really, are willing to put in the time and energy to answer questions…the whole process of being a UN rep really relied on that passive knowledge of one generation of women to the next.″ (I10)

It is clear in the narrative that intergenerational mentoring was crucial for this delegate to stay and grow in her UN involvement. She appreciates the time and energy invested by more experienced activists. As I turn to challenges of UN activism time and energy emerge again as themes because SWS members are volunteer activists. Time and money resources shape access to this field of global feminist public sociology.

Challenges of SWS' global feminist public sociology at the UN

Effective global activism in the realm of the UN is "a question of reconnaissance, somebody has to have the time to ferret out the place where SWS can make a mark, a small one but a significant one and build from there but it does take personnel, the time, and some funding (I18)." The constraints of time and money as resources has shaped the history of SWS' involvement with the UN and mark one of the most significant differences of SWS to other NGOs of the global women's movement. Historically SWS scholars in the NYC area attended UN meetings because they have "deluxe access" (I17) to the UN due to their geographical closeness.

> "Eventually it was up to the women in NYC who could attend UN meetings. Helen Raisz was in Connecticut, Judy [Gordon] and Jackie [Skiles] lived in the city. And you needed support from your university to come there, so it ended up being people from NYC" (I15)

SWS UN delegates are "volunteer representatives" (I17) and different from full time paid activists of better-resourced NGOs. Also, "there are a lot of people involved as NGOs at the UN, who are just wealthy women who find this an interesting thing to do and they spend all their time there…It's hard when you're not funded to do it and you are trying to catch the attention of people in your spare time" (I18). Some SWS UN delegates fell out of their work due to the financial strain of participating, so "those who live in the northeast area are the one's more likely to participate because they can afford to and that's the inherent bias. If SWS wants to participant in the UN then if there is somebody at a university in Kentucky, or south Florida, or Minnesota then they should be given the opportunity and that's where we should be putting our funds" (I19). That also points to one of the major challenges discussed in SWS' scholarly literature and the narratives

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represented here: differences between women. Many SWSers locate a ″competition at the UN amongst groups and there are a couple of more powerful well established women's' organizations who get picked as the lead organizations″ (I15). This is an experience that has been translated into critical transnational feminist research (Desai 2007a, Desai 2007b, Naples and Desai 2002). The focus on the CSW is shaped by geographical proximity, ″for instance the Human Rights Commission meets in Geneva every year, not long after the CSW meetings in New York. SWS delegates haven't been able to participate in those, yet the work of early UN delegates was precarious:

> ″I suggested that we should put CSW as our focus, because we did not have full time people like other NGOs that were committed to this UN work, we were doing this activism on the side, and again a lot of the people who were doing it had all kind of adjunct faculty positions. They were teaching multiple courses in different institutions, it wasn't even fair that people who were marginal in terms of academic institutions were doing a lot of this work, and partly because they were in the city, or they were involved in the early processing of our NGO status.″ (I13)

Investing time and sometimes personal funds into SWS activism means that these time and resources are missing from other professional activities and service work. Some UN delegates report that their departments and colleagues were not particularly supportive of SWS in general. For some delegates a non-supportive institutional environment was the reason they could not continue their role as UN delegates:

> ″I moved to a new institution which I think is a lot less supportive and a lot less gender friendly, a lot less, there's not that many mentors suggesting that this [SWS] could be a good place and that I should try and make the efforts to go to the meetings … if I wanted to go to a statistics program, I'm sure I could get money. ″ (I10)

Sprague and Laube (2009) asked for institutional arrangements that make doing public sociology difficult, and thus less likely in a large interview study of SWS members. They find two related institutional barriers to doing public sociology: the

culture of professional sociology and the standards used for evaluating scholarship.

Formal evaluation practices place significant emphasis not just on the prestige of the

publication outlet but also on the quantity of publications. Public sociology simply takes

more time, resulting in fewer publications. Along these lines some UN-delegates' work is

made possible by institutional support from their departments for the benefit of SWS and

future generations of scholar-activists which confirms the findings of Sprague and Laube

(2009):

> ″I think part of the problem in doing the international work…is getting people who are interested in it and willing to give the time. Part of difference that I make is that I was willing to do that. Now in a way I probably wasn't producing as many publications as I might have done. It took away from some of the other professional work that I might have been doing. I am not in a department that really puts a lot of pressure on me to publish, publish, publish. They like the idea that I was involved in the UN. But it did take a lot of time. I was always amazed but how much time it took.″ (I14)

Institutional support also means support within SWS which some members perceive as

missing. Even though SWS has in recent years resourced the International Committee

with a $2,000 budget (which can go towards the costs of parallel events as well as partial

reimbursements for UN delegates).

Some delegates informally told me about ″the petition issue″ that remained a

ghost like an urban legend even though I tried to clarify what happened. The legend goes

that some UN delegates had signed a petition, possibly on the freedom of Palestine, on

behalf of SWS and other members disagreed and would not have signed this particular

petition because ″they were all Jewish″ (I10). It represents an issue of authority because

the UN representatives are elected to represent SWS; true authority resides in the

executive committee and with other elected officers, ″if there are big issues that may be

controversial we check with the President″ (I15, Smith 2007). But then there were other

petitions like one to ratify CEDAW that were obviously within SWS interests and could not be signed. One participant shares "it's been a frustration that there are some things that we haven't been able to do. My feeling is if we are representing the organization; we should be representing the organization." (I16). .

A further challenge is the high turnover within the UN system. Diana Papademas as well as Jackie Skiles were able to meet with the director of DAW on different occasions, and other SWS delegates confirmed that SWS was "recognized." Yet one UN delegate explains that high turnover at the UN makes it difficult to maintain relationships:

> "There is a big changeover, at the lower level staff. Looking back, even from year to year I've tried to go back and reconnect with certain individuals I met previously and they have either moved on or there in another part of the UN or something. There is a quite a bit of turnover. The UN also has a retirement age policy at age sixty."

Insinuated in the quote above also is the fact that predominantly "lower level staff" is employed to deal with the NGO's that convene during and parallel to the CSW meetings. Another delegate shares that she was successful in approaching actual U.S. country delegates, yet remained unconvinced about the level of influence they may have on actual proceedings after the conversation: " The man was nice, but he was kind of just sitting at the desk, to make sure there was a U.S. person at the desk. I do not think he had too much influence in U.S. policy. Ideally, we would like to influence U.S. policy."

Considering the influence SWS scholars have had on shaping our understanding of gender, a challenge is that the UN operates with a binary gender system that has become too narrow for most of the feminist sociologists within SWS. Feminist sociology has over the past decades challenged a binary gender system and has conceptualized

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gender as a multi-layered, multi-dimensional concept that is rooted in naturalized

differences between two socially constructed sexes (Fuchs Epstein 2007, Lorber 1994).

Feminist discussions of gender have shown that gender is manufactured in performative

interaction, and manifests as social institution and a fundamental social order (Andersen

2005). Gender includes discussions of non-normative gender identities and expressions,

as well as sexualities, which is beyond the UN's understanding of gender realtions:

> ″I think in the UN and the CSW still equates women with genders, so there's
> limitations on how much impact it can have on my work because that's the
> framework I came into it with as a beginning graduate student school with that's
> not the framework I left grad school with.″ I10

SWS has, like other NGOs and other parts of the UN system specifically tried to open up

the gender understanding and to challenged the simplistic interpretation and/or

application of gender by introducing a broader range of concerns in its written statement

of 2013 in that it addressed violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

individuals as an issue to be taken seriously at the level of the CSW. The effort to include

related language in the outcome document in this regard failed. The recurrent failure of

intergovernmental bodies that have to necessarily come to a minimal common

denominator for an outcome document has been discussed in the literature (Jauk

forthcoming 2013, Bedford 2010, Buss and Herman 2003). Some SWS scholars thus

suggest transgressing the limitations of the UN and investing in grassroots organizations

and expanding to other forums such as the World Social Forum:

> ″What about the grassroots organizations. I think of some of these
> groups here or in San Francisco, like it's this great organization called
> ″Brown Boi Project″ and boy is spelled boi. It's really doing some
> really radical work on transgender and sexuality and their limited in
> funds, and we're super rich. So those kinds of really grassroots
> organizations in the US and outside the US are at the Social Forum.
> Those are the kinds of organizations that I'd like to see us building

connections with. Probably starting with the ones that are in the US, the US Social Forum would be a good place to start. But I would say 'putting our money where our mouth is,' I've said that before.″ (I19)

The marginal position as an NGO in the UN system is another challenge SWS faces. Not only is SWS marginalized because it is an NGO vis-a-vis the power apparatus of nation states, but also because it represents marginalized women. The UN system itself is notorious for being male-centered and male-dominated. A report of 2010 shows that the representation of women slightly increased from 38.4 per cent in 2007 to 39.9 per cent in 2009, but women comprise less than a third (28.4 per cent) of the three highest professional ranks (United Nations 2010a). Since its inception in 1945 there has never been a female Secretary General (Warburg and Suban 2006) and women-related units are notoriously underfunded and less respected within the UN system (Sandler and Rao 2012, Miller, Razavi and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development 1998). SWS is part of what one SWS activist calls the ″other″ UN which is ″the UN of volunteers, and the Civil Society movement people…we are there on a fuzzy marginalized voluntary basis. We do not have any formal power in the UN″ (I17). SWS in this light is only one ″tiny little NGO out of maybe three or four thousand NGOs″(I18) so ″making a big mark is unrealistic″ (I 20).

Considering other NGOs, SWS is a ″strange animal″ as it does not have one agenda, but is a professional association of feminist sociologists and others interested in feminist social change. A majority of UN delegates suggest that SWS as NGO should capitalize on its broad knowledge base and the broad feminist goals it pursues, instead of narrowing to one single agenda. ″No matter what topic, SWS can produce experts and expert knowledge.″ (I10). So SWS can make its limitation its strength and continue

through parallel events and written statements to influence the language and processes

within the CSW. This strength can turn into a limitation when it comes to certain topics:

> ″…the fact that we don't have one collective voice or vision, that
> makes it difficult to talk about violence against women for example
> this coming year...some people might see prostitution as a woman's
> choice. If she wants to be a prostitute it's her own choice, it's her body.
> There are some people who see that as we need to get rid of all
> prostitution that's a violation of a woman's body.″ (I15)

UN delegates offer suggestion on how to overcome limitations and make global

activism more efficient, in addition to written statements and side events. One suggestion

is that the range of published work should be made accessible to the UN and at the UN.

This can happen through thematic bibliographies based on SWS scholarship but also

through using UN publishing opportunities, to lift SWS work into visibility among UN

practitioners. Several delegates also suggest focusing on UN Women and ″go and either

meet with people at UN Women and see how we can available for expert panels and

research″ (I14). Yet raising visibility of SWS is not only an ″outside Job″ as current UN

delegates suggest but also an inside job: ″The more people in SWS can understand what

our role is and what we are doing there, and what our impact is and how it ties in with the

SWS mission, the more participation we're going to get. I also think if we can figure out

how to tie in with our global partners that would be ideal″ (I16). Almost all UN delegates

suggest integrating the UN work with the program of global partnership and for one

″increase our knowledge of what is going on in other parts of the world, to kind of

decentralize women's sociology″ (I 14). It is in this context that SWS and global activism

is portrayed as ″the perfect blend″ in the quote that precedes this article.

Conclusion

I have in this paper argued that SWS is fulfilling its activist mission in the global arena through its members' activism at the UN. As feminist scholars, activists, mentors, and teachers SWS members offer constructive critique in and around UN policy construction. In particular SWS's UN scholar-activism is increasing the visibility and applicability of feminist sociology, critically examines but also disrupts hegemonic discourse, and offers opportunities for concrete social change, particularly through guidance in activism, mentoring, and teaching.

First, activism at the UN increases visibility and applicability for feminist sociology. The UN is a public outlet for SWS scholars to present research through for example parallel events and research briefs in the form of written statements to the CSW. Some SWS scholars work with the UN in their individual capacity as consultants and sociologists. SWS UN delegates are increasing the visibility of SWS not only at the United Nations but also in the scholarly community. Participants shared that they have or are presenting their UN work in the context of SWS to the International Sociology Association, Society to Study Social Problems, the International Communication Association, the Eastern Sociological Society as well as at ASA "to keep making SWS's work as visible as I can within our professional arena."(I 17) .

Second, SWS members have not only identified disparities in the UN discourse but actively disrupt it. With the critical transnational feminist lens the UN is a global construct in which states are reconfigured, as the diplomatic missions to the UN reproduce the imagination of a unified state. Yet members of SWS disrupt this discourse

not only with scholarly work but also with feminist transnational interventions on site. ″To do sociology for women (and men) in society and thrive, we need to challenge the discourses that are disciplining us″ (Sprague 2008: 703), and SWS scholar activists at the UN are doing exactly that. Recognizing that the UN that is a critical vehicle for transnational feminist organizing since the 1990s, there is also an awareness of profound differences and hierarchies between women in terms of who can participate in UN meetings due to wealth, education, and geopolitical location

(Naples 2002, Desai 2005b, Desai 2007a, Desai 2002).

Third, even though the gender equality regime (Kardam 2004) built around the UN is a set of primarily discursive and symbolic commitments made by governments with very little actual commitment of resources, women's movements have used these symbolic commitments to achieve victories at the local levels (Desai 2007b). ″The larger question is whether society has changed as a result of the work of SWS″, ask Feltey and Rushing (1998: 224). They conclude that the fact that SWS has practiced a combination of liberal politics (professional advancement) alongside an active radical political agenda has kept SWS viable over time, but it is questionable how the power gained within the academy can be translated into actual social change. SWS members like Susan Lee lead the way in how to utilize international agreements by her practical call for action to other SWS members on how to move forward the ratification of CEDAW (Lee 2010).

SWS members have internationalized Sociology of Gender& Global Gender Studies (Bose 2006) and incorporated their activism and scholarly work into their classes. Sprague and Laube (2009: 267) believe that ″sociology as a discipline has an ethical obligation to engage in public sociology. (We have and will continue to develop

knowledge that could help improve the lives of others and remedy serious social ill)." I

believe that SWS has an ethical obligation to expand on its rich history and experiences

and further engage in global feminism with a critical transnational perspective.[19]

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I explored the social construction of global gender equality policy in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in the United Nations (UN). I present the research in three chapters/studies, each offering different angles and theoretical approaches to the research site. Across these chapters there are three main overarching linkages: First, all bear the good news that civilians from communities around the globe potentially have a voice in international governance. In fact, the CSW is the commission of the UN with the highest participation of civil society (DESA NGO 2013a, Bachelet 2012).

While the first study shows that LGBT voices may be silenced (yet they exist and persist), the second study highlights that voices of different women are differently recognized in the UN system. The third study lays out how women sociologists have successfully utilized the UN as a stage to disseminate feminist sociological research. In short, the three studies tell a story about movement toward global social justice and the factors benefitting and challenging the process of civil society participation in this endeavor in the context of the UN.

Second, in all three studies my goal is to link micro and macro levels of analysis (Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981) to show how interactions on a micro level e.g. negotiations or day-today lobbying work of activists at the CSW) can shape a macro context (such as an outcome document that constitutes global norms for 193 member states and sets standards for gender equality on a global scale). In turn, particularly in the first study, I show how global context may shape self-perception of individuals and social problems in member states. Using macro-level data (outcome documents) and micro-level data (interviews with transgender individuals living in the Midwest U.S.), I argue that the silencing of transgender violence at the UN is a form of representational violence (Valentine 2007) that contributes to self-depreciation and interpersonal violence in trans-lives. This example illustrates the bold sociological claim that large scale social phenomena such as gender inequality are shaped by, but also shape global governance that in turn affects gender democracy in member states and the actual life chances of individuals worldwide.

Finally, the overarching strategy in all of my work is to use feminist methodology to tackle patriarchal structures and social behavior in patriarchal context. As noted throughout the dissertation, feminist methodology is a rich and varied toolbox rather than a monolithic recipe for doing sociology. My work demonstrates that different feminist methodological tools and literatures are able to carve out different aspects of the same research site. Along the lines of C. Wright Mills (1959) I understand sociology as a craft. As a sociologist with a multi-method approach I collect different types of data, equaling media or materials an artist or craftswoman might work with. In choosing my

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methodological tools I am and will remain dedicated to the feminist giants on whose shoulders I stand.

The research presented in this dissertation offers three important contributions. First, it adds a unique perspective on the global gender equality regime literature, which has mainly focused on Non- Governmental Organizations and grassroots discourses (Moghadam 2009, Ferree and Tripp 2006; Jain 2005). Although significant literature on women and globalization exists (Chow, Segal, and Tan, 2011, Bose and Kim 2009;) limited research to date has discussed gender policy development on the organizational level. My work highlights the ″ruling relations″ (Smith 2009, 2005) within the UN system which remain hidden to those (women) who are most affected by them. I apply the tools of institutional ethnography (Eastwood 2005,; Smith, 1990, 2005) to unpack bargaining processes of global democratic politics. Institutional ethnography emphasizes connections between the sites and situations of everyday life, professional practice, and policy making. Such connections are accomplished primarily through what Smith (2005) has labeled textually mediated social organization.

Second, I was able to access multiple data sources as a result of the varied roles I held in the context of this research (discussed extensively in chapter III). I draw on material, interviews, and observations that were only accessible because of my insider status. I had access to archival material that is not publicly available and to the hard-to-reach population of UN staff and diplomats. These rich data sources shed light on the micro-processes of democratic global governance that shape (and are shaped by) macro-level value-systems. My research substantiates public global gender policy with empirical

research on the routines of gender equality policy development and the (sometimes conflicting) values that drive them.

Third, looking at the intersection of global governance and civil society I found that there are gaps between the democratic ideals of the United Nations and its member states in terms of access of civil society and consensual outcome documents and the actual processes of negotiation. My ethnographic data show how individuals and civil society are incorporated into, but are simultaneously denied access to global governance and democracy. I addressed insider/outsider issues in ethnography and the access of civil society to the UN explicitly in chapter III and found that hierarchies of race, class, geopolitical location, and education accentuates differences between women activists and creates unequal access. For instance the process of NGO-ization (Nagar and Raju 2003, Alvarez 2009) that denotes the role of new NGOs as gatekeepers for grassroots activists, knowledge of language and UN processes, as well as degrees of social ties to the home government, including related funding for activists regulates access to the CSW for women. In this context the fourth chapter of my dissertation is a case study of a Northern scholar-activist NGO that is relatively privileged in terms of geopolitical position and resources. I show how feminist sociology found its way to the conference rooms of the CSW via scholar-activists from SWS. Despite relative privilege, feminist sociologists are constrained by traditional academic funding and merit structures, and activists at times struggle to balance activism and scholarship. In both chapter III and IV, my research substantiates critical transnational feminist critique that the ″global women's movement″ is not a monolithic block (Patil 2011, Desai 2007b) and we have to address power

differentials not only between institutions of global governance and women activists, but also between women (Naples and Desai 2002).

The current research project has several limitations. First, as a qualitative, ethnographic study it is bound to its time and place and my findings cannot easily be generalized to other political settings of interaction between civil society and international governance. Second, as a white, educated, member of an academic NGO, I had privilege in accessing the research site and its documents. Even though I try to question my privilege and use my shifting insider/outsider status as tool for qualitative discovery in chapter III, my analysis is curtailed by this inherent bias. Due to the lack of my knowledge of languages other than English and German, I could not fully and credibly enter the worlds of activists from developing countries and cannot speak for any other CSW activist other than myself. The observations I made and the interviews I conducted are shaped by homosocial influences. It is not a coincidence that I had most access and was most comfortable with white women of developed countries aged 30 to 50 during my fieldwork. Thus the fourth major limitation is that even though I set out to address the lack of research about the UN system and the diplomatic discourses, diplomats and UN staff are underrepresented as interview participants in this current study. Even though ethnographic observation is the main data source with interviews as a complementary data source, the issues that arose are valuable lessons for future research. The time pressure of dissertation work and the lack of financial resources were barriers to spending longer periods of time in the field to build relationships with hard to reach populations such as diplomats and others in official positions.

In future research my goal is to examine global power dynamics and the ways in which gender equality terminology is used by different state actors to either enhance or limit democracy and gendered power differentials. I will investigate the ways in which hegemonic discourse is spread globally by exploring shifting alliances of state actors who push but also hinder progress for gender equality. I will also look at the underlying values that shape the meanings of concepts that have been contested in CSW negotiations during the last decade (e.g. gender equality/gender equity, gender democracy, violence against women). I will expand on the ethnographic analysis in my dissertation with systematic document analysis that is linked to quantitative measures of gender equality in member states. My goal is to map gender equality discourse on the diplomatic level, link it back to actual democracy outcomes in member states, identify gaps, and trace the shifting global alliances of state actors.

Systematic document analysis that is linked to quantitative democracy and gender equality measures will substantiate and broaden the scope of my work. In future research I will focus on the annual outcome document of the CSW meetings ("Agreed Conclusions"), and in particular, on the "country statements" that are submitted prior to each CSW meeting The country statements are letters of 2 to 8 pages in which each country positions itself in regard to the annual priority theme of the CSW meeting and lays out language to be bargained into the Agreed Conclusions during the CSW meeting. Eighty to one hundred country statements are received each year; since 2008 these are published online and accessible. Through my excellent field contacts and internal UN informants I am in possession of archival material that has not been stored digitally in the UN system because they were designated for disposal in 2011. These materials contain

all country statements from the years 2006 and 2007, which makes it possible to focus on developments over an 8-year period from 2006-2013.

It is my intention to create an additional database of country statements to CSW negotiations for the time span 2006-2013. The database will also contain all outcome documents and relevant reports, as well as field notes and informal documents (such as drafts of Agreed Conclusions that are circulated during CSW negotiations). I will systematically analyze and trace shifts in gender equality discourse within and between world regions and elicit hidden negotiation processes during CSW meetings. I will link results of the textual analysis to established gender equality indicators established in the annual Human Development report (Gender Empowerment measure, Gender Inequality Index) to shed light on the relationship between democratic ideals (country statements) and democratic practices (actual gender equality in member states). I will complement content and textual analysis with follow-up interviews with diplomats and UN staff members, as I will have access to the field site through an annual UN ground-pass in my capacity as UN delegate (term 2012-2014) and member of the International Committee of Sociologists for Women in Society.

As my standpoint is shifting towards increased outsiderness in relation to the US and the UN Headquarters with my move back to my home country Austria, I may be able to use this new social location to add to my research with in depth perspectives from a UN member state. During my research I was able to make some contacts to Austrian delegates and hope to reinvigorate these connections to explore how the Austrian government and Austrian feminist civil society has incorporated and utilized UN gender equality norms.

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I have presented some of this dissertation at professional meetings, the second chapter is forthcoming in *Advances in Gender Research* in 2013. The second chapter is under review at *Qualitative Sociology*, and the third chapter will be presented at the Power and Justice pre-conference of the ASA section on Human Rights ate the ASA meetings in August 2013, and prepared for submission to *Gender in Society*. The next step is to engage with international communities as I move forward with this research, and to move beyond academia to disseminate the findings. In my further work I want to continue to make visible the processes at the global governance and the state level that are manifest in the everyday lives of women in communities all around the globe but in addition educate the broader public on how to make these processes accessible and manageable for the purpose of gender equality. Processes of global governance in the United Nations seem far removed (and indeed through bureaucratization and professionalization ARE far removed) from the conditions challenging the very existence of women and their children, but they are integral and need to be understood as ″ruling relations″ in the sense of Dorothy Smith (2009, 2005). As such they permeate, structure, and constrain the lives of citizens every day. In turn they are also permeable, changeable, and responsive to social activism. It is time that we help the United Nations in ″promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends″ (United Nations Charter, 1945, Article 1) on the international, national, and local level. My research, as well as its dissemination beyond academia, may hopefully serve as an empowering baby-step in this direction.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECT APPROVAL

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

September 30, 2011

Aniela Jauk
Sociology Department
The University of Akron
Akron, Ohio 44325-1905

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20110920 *"Global Gender Policy Development in the United National: A Sociological Exploration of the Politics, Process and Language"*

Thank you for submitting your Exemption Request for the referenced study. Your request was approved on September 30, 2011. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ **Exemption 1** – Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☒ **Exemption 2** – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ **Exemption 3** - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ **Exemption 4** – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ **Exemption 5** – Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ **Exemption 6** – Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

☒ Approved consent form/s enclosed

Cc: Kathryn Feltey - Advisor
Cc: Stephanie Woods – IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7666 • 330-972-6281 Fax

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution

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APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FALL 2010

Informed Consent

Thank you very much for sharing your knowledge for an exploratory research project conducted by *Daniela Jauk*, Doctoral student in the *Department of Sociology, at The University of Akron*.

Working Title of Study: "The Evolution and Meanings of *Gender* in the UN"

Purpose & Procedures: I am in the process of gaining inspiration for my dissertation and am conducting exploratory, confidential interviews with gender experts within the UN system.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no risks for you involved with this project. In case you feel discomfort during the interview you have the

Right to refuse or withdraw: Your participation is voluntary. You can at any point during the interview stop the interview or refuse to answer the questions posed. You can at any point withdraw your participation in the project.

Benefits: You will receive no direct (financial) benefit from your participation in this study, but your participation will help to better understand which concept(s) of gender shape the policy making process in the UN.

Confidentiality: Any identifying information collected will be kept in a secure location and only Daniela Jauk will have access to the data. Participants will not be individually identified in any publication or presentation of the research results. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your data, and nobody will be able to link your responses to you.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact *Daniela Jauk* (business card attached to this form), or her academic advisor *Dr. Kathryn Feltey*, felteyk@uakron.edu, 330 972 6877. This project will be reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also call the IRB at (330) 972-7666.

I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

_____   _____
Participant Signature   **Date**

APPROVED
IRB
Date _____ 7/26/11
The University of Akron

Consent, 10/2010   Jauk Daniela

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APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM 2011-2013

Informed Consent

Thank you very much for sharing your knowledge and professional experience for a sociological dissertation research project conducted by *Daniela Jauk*, Doctoral student in the *Department of Sociology, at The University of Akron/OH.*

Title of Study: Global Gender Policy Development in the United Nations: A Sociological Exploration of the Politics, Process, and Language

Purpose & Procedures: I am collecting data for my dissertation project which seeks to explore the making of UN - gender equality policy. In the course of my data collection I utilize participant observation, content analysis of policy documents, and archival research in the CSW reference library. Additionally, I am conducting approximately 25 interviews with experts within the UN system. The interviews last about an hour and questions focus on your professional expertise.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no risks for your involvement in this project.

Right to refuse or withdraw: Your participation is appreciated and voluntary. You can at any point during the interview stop the interview or refuse to answer the questions posed. You can at any point withdraw your participation in the project.

Benefits: You will receive no direct (financial) benefit from your participation in this study, but your participation will help scholars and policy-makers better understand global gender equality policy and its production context.

Confidentiality: Any information collected will be kept in a secure location and only I will have access to the data. Participants' names are <u>not</u> recorded anywhere, and you will not be individually identified in any publication or presentation of the research results. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your data, and nobody will be able to link your responses to you.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me, *Daniela Jauk* (business card attached to this form), or my academic advisor *Dr. Kathryn Feltey*, felteyk@uakron.edu, (330) 972-6877. This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may also call the IRB at (330) 972-7666.

I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

_____   APPROVED   _____
Participant Signature   IRB   **Date**

Consent, 9/2011   Jauk Daniela

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE UN INTERVIEWS

I.   Biography – Intro

Please tell me a little bit about yourself, and your journey within the UN

- Career stages, different positions
- What exactly is your work/position in your organization right now?

How did you come to work with the CSW?

- When did you first learn about the CSW?
- What exactly is your work/tasks in and around the CSW today?
- How long have you been doing CSW work?

Why do you come to the CSW meetings (particularly for NGO)?

II.   CSW – significance

Why is the CSW significant and important for global gender equality in member states?

> - "Agreed Conclusions…so what?"

How have you used (as state, as organization, as unit) the CSW-mechanism/Agreed Conclusions in your work – examples?

How is the CSW significant in relation to other mechanisms and the UN system?

> - In relation to CEDAW
>
> - In relation to the whole UN system
>
> - In relation to other UN agencies

What is/was the biggest success/opportunity of the CSW in your perspective?

III.   CSW – challenges

Have you witnessed challenges in regard to certain themes within CSW work, what are these?

> - is there themes/issues that are repeatedly contested?
> - Where do you/your organization stand on these issues?

Are there organizational/structural challenges (that should be improved, how)?

What is/was the biggest failure/shortcoming of the CSW?

IV.   CSW – actors

From your perspective what are the significant actors in the CSW?

- Who has a say?
- Who has the power to shape language of the Agreed Conclusions?

What is your opinion about the NGO involvement? Should/could it be enhanced?

- From your perspective, are actors missing that should be involved?

From your perspective, which actors take most space in terms of power to shape language and define the process?

V.   CSW –change

Have you noticed changes within the CSW in the last years – what are these?

   - Mandate was expanded in 1987, noticeable changes?

What is your "wish" for the CSW?

   - What should be the next move of the UN in regard to gender politics/CSW?

What changes to you see and do you expect with the establishment of UN Women?

What is your "wish" for gobal gender equality?

-   What does gender equality mean to you?
-   How would a perfect world look like in which gender equality is realized?

VI.   Wrap Up- Next steps

Which questions should I have asked you, and did not?

To whom do I have to talk (contact details, please/make connection)?

Which documents to study?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE SWS INTERVIEWS

Thank you for your time and willingness to help. I do have some questions but I would rather collect your experiences and memories of your UN work in SWS, so you can largely define the themes.

- *Herstory of SWS' UN work and its accreditation -Honoring the founding mothers of UN work in SWS*
    - How did you become active in UN work for SWS?
    - Have you been active in other UN contexts (Beijing)?
    - How many years have you been active as delegate?
        - differentiate IC and work as delegate
        - try to get exact years
    - What exactly were your tasks?
    - How were these tasks defined and who defined them?
    - What were the physical and virtual spaces to discuss SWS' UN work?
    - IMPACT of UN work on you
        - Personally
        - On your work

- *Identify CSW challenges and changes within the IC/UN delegates from 1999-2012 (time-span of SWS as accredited NGO)*
    - During your time as delegate did the meaning of CSW work within SWS change?
    - In your experience which were/are the challenges of SWS' work around the CSW?
    - Did you feel supported by the larger SWS, how? If no, how so?
    - Thinking back, what was the most powerful experience for you as SWS delegate?

- *Role of mentoring within SWS*
  - How did knowledge get passed along to you, how did you learn about CSW?
  - Who were important mentors?
  - Did you pass along your knowledge and experiences, to whom ad how?

- *Experience of challenges, limitation, opportunities within the CSW*
  - Which CSW meetings have you been to?
  - Tell me about your experiences at the CSW, what stuck out to you?
  - What in your opinion are challenges/opportunities of the CSW?
  - What is the benefit of SWS' work at the CSW (for SWS, for the world, for delegates…)
  - How do you see the role of SWS in the larger network of NGO's (SWS does not have a specific topic agenda)

- *How did you fall out of your involvement with the un work?*

- *Future directions/recommendations*
  - In your opinion, where should SWS go in regard to global gender equality policy? (Continue to focus on CSW, broaden, change?)
  - What should I have asked you but didn't?
  - With whom do I need to talk if I want to find out more (can establish conact?)

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS (all taped and transcribed verbatim)

#	Date	Current position	Yrs UN	Yrs gender	Notes	Informed consent
1	10/15/2010	Retired	25+	15	In person, office	x
2	11/4/2011	Temp assignment DAW	6	1	In person, office	x
3	11/8/2010	DAW director's office	20	20	In person, office	x
4	11/11/2010	Coordinates NGO's for CSW		8 (joined DAW 2002)	In person, office	x
5	2/26/2012	Staff UN Women	4	4	In person,home	x
6	3/4/2012	IAW - EU Caucus	10		Interview in German, restaurant	x
7	3/6/2012	CSW Bureau	5+	2	In person, coffeeshop	x
8	3/6/2012	State delegate	15	10+	In person, coffeeshop, much noise	x
9	3/7/2012	NGOCSW	20	20	In person, restaurant	x
10	4/12/2012	SWS	5	5	phone	n/a
11	4/27/2012	SWS	20	20	phone	n/a
12	5/8/2012	SWS	20	?	phone	
13	6/12/2012	SWS	10+	20	phone	n/a
14	6/13/2012	SWS	5	10+	phone	n/a
15	6/25/2012	SWS	2		skype	n/a
16	9/24/2012	SWS	10		skype	n/a
17	9/28/2012	SWS	15		phone	n/a
18	10/17/2012	SWS	15		skype	n/a
19	10/15/2012	SWS	10+		skype	n/a
20	10/22/2012	SWS	15		skype	n/a

APPENDIX G

LIST OF SWS CSW STATEMENTS

Statement submitted CSW 54/2010, E/CN.6/2010/NGO/31,

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/documentation.html

Statement submitted CSW 55/2011, E/CN.6/2011/NGO/20,

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/documentation.htm

Statement submitted CSW 56/2012, E/CN.6/2012/NGO/54,

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/documentation.htm

Statement submitted CSW 57/2013, E/CN.6/2013/NGO/48

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/documentation.htm

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2013/NGO/48

APPENDIX E

CONSENT EMAIL INVITATION SWS

My name is Daniela Jauk and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Akron (advisor Dr. Kathryn Feltey). I am also an avid SWSer, have been very active in the local SWS chapter, and currently serve as UN delegate for SWS to the UN. My dissertation with the working title "Global Gender Policy Development in the United Nations: A Sociological Exploration of the Politics, Process, and Language" focuses on the CSW and I want to dedicate one chapter to the work of SWS in this context. The idea is to construct a herstory of SWS' work in the UN context based on interviews and written records (Network News) as a case study for the interaction of civil society and the UN system and with it celebrate founding mothers and mentoring processes within SWS.

Your name has been mentioned to me several times as an important SWS delegate and activist in the UN context, and I would love to collect your experiences and memories of your UN work in SWS and honor and document your important work. I thus kindly request an interview with you. Since I am a grad student lacking funds, I suggest a phone interview of about one hour (more or less at your discretion) which should be fairly easy: Once we agree on a day and time I can call your phone and - with your permission - record our conversation. If you have a skype account that would be even better and we could see each other, my ID is "divanova06."

The project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Akron, IRB # 20110920, signed consent forms for the SWS chapter have been waived. Your participation in the interview counts as consent. However, there are a few standards I want to establish for our collaboration:

- **Risks and Discomforts:** There are no risks for your involvement in this project.
- **Right to refuse or withdraw:** Your participation is much appreciated and voluntary. You can at any point during the interview stop the interview or refuse to answer the questions posed. You can at any point withdraw your participation in the project.
- **Confidentiality:** Any information collected will be kept in a secure location and only I will have access to the data. You interview will be transcribed; I will delete the audiotape.
- **Off the record conversations:** You are welcome to indicate during or after the interview which parts you want me to handle "off the record" – that means your name will never be associated with this information and I will keep the transcript of these passages in a separate anonymous file.
- **Member Check:** If I quote you by name in a manuscript to be published (My goal is the publication of the chapter in article form in *Gender&Society* eventually) I will share the manuscript with you in advance for your feedback and consent. I will greatly appreciate your input also in terms of enhancing the validity of this qualitative research.
- **Benefits:** You will receive no direct (financial) benefit from your participation in this study, but your participation will help to document and celebrate the rich history of Sociologists for Women in Society and help younger members to learn from your experiences.

I sincerely hope you will give me the chance to learn from you, and thank you in advance for considering to share your knowledge and professional experience. It would be great if you could let me know which time slots in the next weeks would work best for you for an interview. You can also call me anytime (330) 318 1357, or share your phone number with me in an email to make an appointment.

Feminist greetings,

Dani

APPENDIX F

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DESA	Division for Economic and Social Affairs
DPI	Department of Public Information
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NGO CSW/NY	NGO Committee on the Status of Women (office New York City)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	Undersecretary General
SG	Secretary General
SWS	Sociologists for Women in Sociology
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women