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## **Chapter 10. Global feminist organising: Identifying patterns of activism**

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Social movements move. They are coordinated activities, not things, so attempts to define women's movements need to focus on the work they do, the purposive human activities specifically aiming to transform the gender relations that subordinate and devalue women. This activity is feminist work; it is done especially but not exclusively by women, and will thus generally be found in women's movements, groups organised and led by women. But as the research in previous chapters indicates, feminist transformation is better defined by its purpose than its form; feminism is more about the work of change-making than the particular structures in which this work is done. Nonetheless, these institutional venues vary in interesting and important ways. Indeed, the intention of achieving gender relations that support autonomy and equality for all women means that feminist activities will be joined in movement practices to other kinds of work for social justice, in varying degrees at diverse moments.

Focusing on the *intentional transformative work of embodied human beings* as the defining feature not only of women's movements but of all social movements, and considering the broad spectrum of such work – discursive practices as well as resource distribution and

political institution building – emphasises agency over structures. Even though, as Marian Sawer notes in Chapter 1, many activists doing recognisably feminist work may eschew the label ‘feminist’ for themselves, we embrace it as an adjective describing the intention of creating conditions for ending women's subordination in gender relations. It is always a contested goal; beliefs that gender relations cannot (determinist) or should not (patriarchal) be changed inspire steady resistance to claims advanced by feminists in specific times and places.

In the face of such continuous resistance to change, institutionalised in forms such as state policies and routine household interactions, efforts to transform gender relations through collective action – what we call feminist organising – are universally significant. Not all feminist activity is feminist organising, since much everyday resistance to the gender order is uncoordinated and individual. Feminist organising is collective activity, though not necessarily contained in or steered by any formal organisation. Feminist organising creates and sustains women’s movements, but it also exists within, and transforms, other social movements, organisations and networks. Feminist organising spans historical periods, links geographical places, and uses a variety of organisational tools.

The previous chapters of this book make a strong, empirically grounded case for seeing transformative feminist organising across multiple domains as defining the Australian women's movement. The book as a whole also offers an inclusive understanding of such feminist work as involving discursive practices, organisation building, and policy transformations. Feminist organising practices focus both on changing persons (the

perceptions, motivations, identities of self and others) and on changing social structures (challenging institutions such as organisations, rituals, and cultural norms), sometimes prioritising one and sometimes the other.

This chapter now moves from this extended case study to make broader claims about when, where and how the work of the women's movement gets done around the world.

Borrowing an image from historian Leila Rupp, we see global feminist organising less like waves and more akin to “choppy seas,” with feminist organising cresting and falling in different parts of the world at different times.<sup>1</sup> We first present a brief account of this global presence, and then draw out four issues for feminist organising practice: how solidarity is constructed, given the intersectionality of gender relations with other forms of injustice; how the organisational form of feminist mobilisation varies as political opportunities change; how embeddedness in specific structures influences feminist organising opportunities; and how generational change and historical transformations intersect to provoke controversy.

### **A brief history of global feminist organising**

Once feminist organising is recognised as global, it becomes harder to see feminist movements as forming two or even three historical waves.<sup>2</sup> Instead, local feminist claims – such as Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* – arise in the crucible of revolutionary change, create new collective understandings, and travel as discourses over time and space to be taken up in other sites by women who challenge their own status quo, a process Leavitt and Merry call “vernacularization.”<sup>3</sup> Feminist organising is connected

globally with other revolutionary movements such as abolitionist, socialist, nationalist, pro-democracy, anti-war and sexual liberation struggles. These efforts, in which both women and men participate, typically include intentional changes in gender relations.

Many radical movements spawned feminist organising, benefited from feminist participation, and engaged in struggles over priorities that eventually transformed both sides. Such feminist efforts were transnational already in the nineteenth century, since anarchists, socialists and other radicals were deported or emigrated and built new networks in their destinations. For example, “utopian socialists” attempted gender-equalising communal settlements in the US in the 1840s and in Spain in the 1930s; ‘1848ers’ from the failed bourgeois revolutions in Europe fled to North and South America with liberal ideals of civic betterment and democratic participation; deported Italian anarchist women brought their working class feminism to New Jersey and Buenos Aires in the 1890s.<sup>4</sup>

Historical research challenges the conventional story of women’s suffrage as the first transnational women’s movement, and recognises many other feminist organising efforts. Focusing on elite women’s suffrage work creates a one-sided story of limited goals.<sup>5</sup>

Lucretia Mott, Flora Tristán and Clara Zetkin were among the feminist organisers who challenged the class-based politics of suffrage-centred organisations. They believed that ‘to truly transform society meant rooting out oppression in all its forms ... emancipation of any group —slaves, for instance – was inextricably linked with emancipation for all groups – workers, women, prisoners, and other subjugated peoples.’<sup>6</sup> Even in the suffrage movement, feminist organisers embraced multi-issue visions of social change and developed their skills in other movements, often religious, for education, prison reform or temperance.<sup>7</sup> Some

connected their cause with a wider imperial project of ‘civilisation’, campaigning against indigenous customs defined as barbaric, such as polygamy, foot-binding, or women’s uncovered breasts.<sup>8</sup> Feminist anti-slavery advocates also moved into women-led campaigns against the ‘white-slave trade’, the trafficking in women’s bodies for prostitution.<sup>9</sup> That feminist concerns for social justice in this period crisscross other political agendas should be unsurprising. But as feminist organisers tried to address the variety of women’s concerns, tensions over inclusion arose. Working class, African-descent and Jewish women as well as women of colonised and formerly colonised areas (such as Egypt, India, Latin America) insisted on being heard; they, too, forged important transnational networks.<sup>10</sup> Feminist efforts to create cross-class, cross-race and cross-cultural understanding often stumbled.<sup>11</sup> African-American women faced recurrent racist insults, as when Susan B. Anthony asked black women activists to stand at the back of suffrage marches.<sup>12</sup> The feminist orientalism of US and European women meant they considered themselves more ‘civilised’ than other women and set out to rescue Eastern women (especially Muslims) from ‘oppressive’ practices such as the harem.<sup>13</sup> Issues of invisibility and condescension continue today to challenge feminist efforts to create solidarity.

Early struggles also highlight the still-vexed relation among sexuality, gender relations and reproduction. In some countries and classes, suffragists participated in radical sexual reform movements, and these feminists (e.g., Ellen Keys, Helene Stöcker) insisted on women’s right to refuse sex in marriage and to engage in sex outside of marriage.<sup>14</sup> In the 1920s, thousands of protestors in German cities marched for legal abortion and radical women in Greenwich Village asserted their rights to equality in marriage and sex without a wedding.<sup>15</sup>

Other suffragists saw women's sexual morality as higher than men's. Feminists in temperance and home economics movements aimed to protect mothers and wives by elevating the status of domestic work and encouraging men's sexual faithfulness.<sup>16</sup> In some countries, suffragists made gains when they embraced domesticity, and their claims for recognition of maternal contributions to the public good helped create welfare states.<sup>17</sup>

Feminist politics spread and changed in the decades between 1920 and 1960, despite the doldrums experienced by particular organisations and countries. Suffrage victories came late in Latin America (1949 in Chile and 1957 in Colombia). In Chile, women then scattered into political parties but they sustained cross-class unity in Colombia.<sup>18</sup> Women's transnational organising continued after suffrage to fight throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century for labor legislation, married women's citizenship, divorce and child custody, and jury service.<sup>19</sup> Many feminist organisers also turned from suffrage to peace activism in the League of Nations and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.<sup>20</sup> By the 1950s, feminist claims to women's full citizenship succeeded in bringing women's views on issues of war and peace, social welfare and the economy into public forums. By the 1960s, new vitality was flowing into social justice movements in many countries, bringing feminist organising strategies again to the fore.

### **Intersectionality and strategic choice**

As 20<sup>th</sup> century women claimed citizenship they also created organisations to challenge gendered power. Their struggles highlight the question of alliances: whether feminist

organising should be primarily autonomous (that is, exclusively via women's movements) or also use government and other organisations. Feminist experiences of solidarity and exclusion in social justice movements shaped what today are called theories of *intersectionality*, and cross-cutting experiences of oppression shaped feminist choices of collective strategies for change.

For many feminists, solidarity meant organising women as women to help themselves, their families and other women. 'Lifting as we climb' was the phrase popularised by the Black women's club movement in the US for this strategy; these clubs proliferated in the Jim Crow South of the US and were undeniably feminist in their labours.<sup>21</sup> Self-help is a grassroots feminist strategy for empowerment that did not emerge only in the 1960s battered women's shelters or anti-rape hotlines but was always a vital means of organising, and remains important across the Global South.<sup>22</sup>

When women organised in mixed sex groups, they often discovered gender subordination, and then looked for solidarity with other women to contest it.<sup>23</sup> From the 1950s to the 1970s, feminist organising was both *embedded* in movements (such as labor unions, anti-colonial rebellions, and racial liberation struggles) and *autonomous*, as women split from them to work with other women. *Autonomous* feminist organising emerged at scales from the local to the transnational, with women's own formal organisations and grassroots, women-only collectives.<sup>24</sup> Autonomous feminist organising is often more controversial but embedded forms of feminist organising have always co-existed.<sup>25</sup>

Many of feminism's thinkers and organisers emerged from class-based or race-based political organisations of the Left, especially in and through labour unions and socialist parties.<sup>26</sup> In the US, not only African-American and white, but Latina, Asian-American and Native American women found their work stymied by men's indifference or resistance, and established their own organisations.<sup>27</sup> White feminist radicals might have given sexism more weight than racism, but most women of color resisted the claim that one or the other had to take first place.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, contestation over sexuality grew. Lesbians challenged the heteronormative assumptions of straight women, creating alliances and conflicts around issues of male power in and over women's sexuality (such as prostitution, pornography, rape and harassment).<sup>29</sup> The underlying social networks among lesbians often made these communities the backbone of feminist autonomous organising, but the more clearly autonomous the women's organisation, the more it was disparaged as being by and for lesbians only.<sup>30</sup> In contexts where same-sex relationships are strongly and violently repressed (e.g. the American South and many African countries), this association of feminism with lesbianism is dangerous. Even in more tolerant contexts, stigmatising feminism as lesbian or 'man-hating' makes it difficult to use 'the f-word'.<sup>31</sup>

In the late 1960s and 1970s in the US, theorising these connections among issues emerged as significant, first in the writings and actions of African American women, such as Frances Beal (in 1970) and the Combahee River Collective, and then further elaborated by other feminist women of color.<sup>32</sup> Intersectionality is now the preferred term for the significance



of intersecting social structures of inequality experienced by individuals in specific social locations.<sup>33</sup> The concept of intersectionality has traveled widely and become an explicit norm for most feminist organisers, especially in ethnically divided contexts.<sup>34</sup> For example, intersectionality became important in Latin America after confrontations over differences at the regional feminist ‘encuentros’ in the 1980s highlighted differences by social class, indigeneity, and rural-urban location.<sup>35</sup> Despite embracing intersectionality in theory, feminist organisers in the Global North sometimes still ignore their own power and position in practice, ignoring and alienating those whom they wish to help and sometimes producing more harm than good in local situations.<sup>36</sup>

In sum, feminist organising in the 1960s and 70s, unlike its stereotype, was not only white and middle class, and did not emerge only in ‘the West’. Tensions due to race and class differences were neither trivial nor overlooked. Intersectional feminist organising came to mean several things. First, it made the divergent positions and interests among women *visible* rather than advancing an essentialising view of women. Second, it implied *choosing priorities* politically with an eye toward inclusive solidarity, seeking common ground against the background of acknowledged differences. Third, it assumed *organisational variability* in strategies and priorities, recognising that women’s goals vary across structural locations and organisational strategies differ in their effects. Rather than identifying universal strategic interests theoretically and representing them through a single movement, feminist intersectionality theories affirm the value of the eclecticism actually seen in feminist practices.<sup>37</sup>

### **Historically changing opportunities**

Autonomous strategies vary in appeal and effectiveness depending on the *political opportunity structure* in particular times and places.<sup>38</sup> The United Nations offered a global opportunity structure that responded to feminists and spurred transnational feminist organising. As well as declaring 1975 International Women's Year and then 1976–85 the UN Decade for Women, the UN sponsored four global conferences on women (in Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing). These conferences served as an inspiration for national and regional organising, fostered more transnational networking, drew media attention and gave feminists around the world the opportunity to frame women's rights and empowerment as important.<sup>39</sup> Feminist organisers successfully placed women's right to be free of violence on the international human rights agenda, reproductive rights on the international population agenda, and women's education and poverty on the global development agenda.<sup>40</sup> These international gains provide important feminist leverage on national governments.

Changes in political opportunities for feminist organising also vary regionally. Some feminist groups emerged in the 1960s and 70s as part of anti-colonial or revolutionary struggles; others hit their peak only in the 1980s and 90s as part of democratisation movements. The variation reveals key global and regional dynamics as well as historical opportunities.<sup>41</sup> Groups coming later in countries as diverse as South Korea, Poland and Argentina built on theories developed elsewhere and drew on resources from transnational feminist advocacy networks.<sup>42</sup> The shift to the right in US politics, by contrast, weakened

the ability of feminists to rely on American support for human rights initiatives, including feminist ones.

In Africa, nationalist movements, democratic movements and violent conflicts had mixed effects on feminist organising. In Zimbabwe and South Africa, for example, women took up arms for liberation, some thinking this was the beginning of a struggle for women's equality, which ended up only partly realised as some found opportunities in the later democratisation movement in Zimbabwe and in the negotiated transition from apartheid in South Africa. South African women organised autonomously across racial lines, took on important roles in the government, and constructed specific women's policy machinery to respond to women's needs, especially those of rural Black women.<sup>43</sup> In Ghana, women were able to successfully draw on pre-colonial women's institutions to challenge non-democratic governments, and when violent conflicts came to an end, as in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, women as peacemakers often found more political opportunity.<sup>44</sup>

In Central America, women in Nicaragua and El Salvador became feminist activists through their involvement with revolutionary movements in the 1970s and 1980s, but later on found their concerns marginalised. The revolutionary movement in Chiapas, Mexico in the 1990s then learned from them and explicitly included feminism in its platform and feminists on its revolutionary team.<sup>45</sup> Across South America in the 1980s, transitions from military dictatorships to democracy provided favorable political opportunities for feminist organising. Feminists joined human rights activists and poor women's survival-oriented groups to confront dictatorships, and in Brazil and Chile, these alliances contributed to creating the democratic transition.<sup>46</sup> Latin American feminist organisers often succeeded in

connecting democratisation to creating women's ministries and reforming family law, often bringing issues of divorce and reproductive rights to the top of the agenda in feminist ways.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, this was typically not the case in Eastern Europe, where claims that communism had solved the 'woman question' undermined women's organising efforts in the 1990s and encouraged an anti-feminist politics of reproduction after democratisation.<sup>48</sup> After 2005, as Eastern European states gradually gained membership in the EU, opportunities for feminists rose again, as gender equality treaty provisions served as resources for pressuring their national governments.<sup>49</sup>

As in South America, democratisation in South Korea served as an opportunity for feminist organising; women activists in the pro-democracy movement brought in an explicitly feminist agenda of opposing sexual violence and supporting the rights of women workers.<sup>50</sup> In India, the suspension of democratic rights in the 'state of emergency' of the 1970s mobilised feminists as part of the pro-democracy resistance; when martial law ended in 1977, these groups turned their attention to other abuses, such as judicial insensitivity to rape and domestic violence.<sup>51</sup> In China, the UN's Beijing Conference provided opportunity for Chinese feminists to legitimise their own organising.<sup>52</sup>

In sum, particular opportunity structures at the global, regional, national and local levels shape feminist organising in historically specific ways. Across all continents, women's grassroots organisations joined non-gender-specific movements for democracy or political liberalisation, often with stunning effect, but sometimes yielding only marginalisation. The Australian experience echoes this lesson, with feminists shifting strategic focus across

national, subnational and transnational levels as governments changed and transnational opportunities arose.

### **Embedding and autonomy as strategic choices**

Feminist organising happens from the outside in, through autonomous activism, and from the inside out, as embedded feminists work within organisations to activate them for gender change. Embedded feminist organising reflects the institutional structures in which it occurs; for example, in the USA, Catholic feminists became radically anti-hierarchical due to their powerlessness within this structure, while military feminists narrowed their goals and became more identified with their hierarchy as anti-discrimination laws gave them leverage in it.<sup>53</sup> In the 1990s, Latin American feminists were bitterly divided between those seeking to pursue change as outsiders and those willing to collaborate with and within the state, who were viewed by the former as ‘selling out’.<sup>54</sup>

Differences in resources and access help explain which groups choose embedded or autonomous strategies. The costs and benefits for feminist organisers in each strategy vary, but organisers are not always free to choose which way to work, but need to decide what openings and resources they can use in a particular place and time. Within such material constraints, there are also negotiations about how strategies fit with activists’ identities and goals, which then culturally channel organising efforts in particular directions. Specific countries and local contexts also provide historical frameworks for making some ideas appear more unfamiliar and radical, even when they may be normalised as common sense in other places. Radicalism is a relative, not absolute, attribute of ideas, actions and identities.<sup>55</sup>

As the Australian case shows, cooperation with the state and organisational formalisation has been controversial, since ‘standing outside and throwing stones’ seems more radical than ‘moving inside and occupying space’ and will appeal to those for whom a self-definition as radical matters.<sup>56</sup> Being seen not as radical but as pragmatic and ‘sensible’ appeals to other organisers, especially those to whom short-term strategic reforms are important aims. Working with or within the state encourages an organisational style that is more formalised and relies on expertise, not numbers, a style often criticised as ‘NGOisation’.<sup>57</sup>

The turn to NGOisation in movements has many, generally complementary causes. Including demands from government for accountability for public money, donor interests may drive the formalisation of budgets and organisational roles, since these help to meet donor concerns for assuring fiscal accountability.<sup>58</sup> Fiscal austerity also produces more NGOs, as states outsource work in poor communities to feminist organisations. Institutional isomorphism – groups copying structures and activities that seem “appropriate” – is also a factor.<sup>59</sup> UN conferences and their parallel NGO forums also spurred NGOization by offering better access and resources to formally organised groups.<sup>60</sup>

But NGOs still do feminist organising. NGOs typically participate in ‘transnational advocacy networks’, mixes of individuals and groups with shared values, high levels of expertise and direct engagement with policy makers, connected across national boundaries.<sup>61</sup> Such networks facilitate feminist influence on government policy; in the early 1990s, they helped develop European Union sexual harassment policies, Canadian asylum

policy for battered women and South Korean revisions in family law.<sup>62</sup> NGOs serve as sites for developing feminist knowledge, circulating feminist frames within and across local sites, building support for feminist positions, and acquiring and sharing resources and facilitating subsequent mobilisations.<sup>63</sup>

These organising gains carry associated costs. NGOs prioritise the contributions of highly educated women (who can offer expertise) over grassroots protest and community engagement.<sup>64</sup> This hierarchy reinforces the material resource differences between more and less formalised types of groups.<sup>65</sup> NGO work also undervalues grassroots organising contributions to building a culture of empowerment, habits of protest, emotionally rewarding communities, and counter-hegemonic identity as a radical.<sup>66</sup> The embedded organising of the 1990s spread ‘state feminism’ around the world, as women’s policy machineries in government multiplied like mushrooms.<sup>67</sup> Time and again, across national contexts, the ‘pincer’ strategy of combining insider feminist efforts with autonomous feminist organising has proved the most effective.<sup>68</sup> Shirin Rai describes this position as being ‘in and against the state’.<sup>69</sup>

In sum, organisers’ success in creating advocacy networks and having influence on and through state policies still relies on the continued energy devoted to autonomous organising, too. Some analysts see insider feminism as winning a feminist struggle for women’s access to state power that began in suffrage campaigns; others view the consolidation of feminist politics in institutions as a threat to outsider strategies.<sup>70</sup> Negative and positive assessments

of NGOisation may reflect context: Liu shows how Chinese feminists embraced the UN push toward NGO development as creating opportunities to organise, while Indian feminists saw the same process as threatening their grassroots organisations and diluting their radical claims.<sup>71</sup>

### **Transformations over time and generational conflicts**

In the 1990s and 2000s, younger feminists claimed to do ‘third wave’ feminist politics, contrasting themselves and their issues with those of earlier generations.<sup>72</sup> The ‘third wave’ argument appears mostly in those countries where the so-called second wave crested earlier; in many parts of the world, surges of feminist organising only began in the 1980s or 1990s, and generational succession remains moot.<sup>73</sup> Clearly, those coming of age a generation after a blossoming of their countries’ autonomous feminist movements encountered feminism differently. They may have had feminist mothers; feminist analyses had more cultural legitimacy; anti-feminist organising was intensifying; in some countries, the culture of consumer capitalism proclaimed feminism had succeeded, died and been replaced by commodities symbolising women’s freedom.<sup>74</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 1, relationships between younger and older feminists in such contexts are also complicated by a media culture that presents earlier ‘feminists’ as dowdy, asexual, insufficiently radical and exclusively white, stereotypes from which women would like to distance themselves.<sup>75</sup> Weigman also identifies an ‘idiom of failure’ used to distinguish the present righteous radicalism from the limited and luckless feminism of the past.<sup>76</sup> Yet many younger feminists appreciate the transformative struggle needed to produce the gender relations they now experience.<sup>77</sup> Some now accept what conservatives



call 'equity feminism' (access on men's terms) and sexual self-assertion ('grrrl power') and resist any further rethinking of gender, while others value collective action, intersectional justice and an inclusive vision of sexuality, one that embraces queer sexuality's many forms.<sup>78</sup>

But it is not only younger women who are conflicted about what 'success' looks like for feminist organising and what the future should be. Contemporary tensions about change also reflect how feminist demands resonate with social forces that organisers do not control. Neoliberalism is one such force restructuring global relations today, as colonialism once was. Some feminists even attribute some gains of neoliberalism in part to feminist organising, albeit unwittingly.<sup>79</sup> Nancy Fraser writes that feminism's critique of the family wage opened doors to low-wage employment of women globally, because neoliberals used this feminist rhetoric to justify the poorest paid and most precarious jobs as offering women access to independence.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, in Bolivia, women's activists aligned with its recent Left government deplore the primarily middle-class feminist NGOs that flourished with the outsourcing of social service work to them by previous neoliberal governments.<sup>81</sup> Other feminists warn that abandoning rights rhetoric will again sideline women and enable a neo-socialist politics unwilling to take seriously issues of sexuality, reproductive rights or violence against women.<sup>82</sup>

Instrumentalisation of feminist rhetoric for state purposes is not new. It was widely critiqued by Russian, Chinese and Eastern European feminists when their communist governments cynically claimed to be committed to women's emancipation.<sup>83</sup> Many

feminists condemn state misappropriation of their claims when concern for women's freedom is used to gain support for US military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>84</sup> Feminists are sincerely divided about whether the state is acting in women's best interests by supporting microenterprises, banning Islamic head covering for women in schools (whether in Turkey or in France) or legalising prostitution.<sup>85</sup> Others who are cynical about the state's reasons may still define policy changes as good, as with the recent German restructuring of childcare leaves to make them shorter, better-paid and partially shared with fathers, or devoting development aid to building girls' schools in Pakistan.<sup>86</sup>

In sum, as feminist discourse has become more acceptable, it has become crucial to distinguish this rhetoric from the actual effects on society that are being legitimated by using it. Some transformations are partly realising feminist aspirations and others are moving in non-feminist ways while clothed in feminist rhetoric. Assuming that one generation has a monopoly on analysing what effects specific changes will have over the medium to long term is problematic, regardless of which generation is getting the credit and which the blame.

### **Conclusion: Against feminist decline**

The present moment is rife with contradictions for feminist organisers. Vibrant value-based networks at global and regional levels have characterized feminist organising for over a century, and reflexivity about intersectionality has increased inclusive solidarity in many feminist organisational contexts. Feminists have arguably been pioneers in organising

transnational advocacy networks and using the power of global norms to shift local practices of oppression.<sup>87</sup>

Both the book's case study of recent Australian feminist activities and this chapter's survey of global organising practices make a strong case that the women's movement is not past its peak, in abeyance or finally over. The frequent claim that feminism is in decline does capture the loss of centrality of certain types of autonomous women's organising.

Paradoxically, the increasing legitimacy of feminist discourse may make forming new autonomous women's organisations less necessary and demonstrating outrage on the streets less useful strategically for feminists who are still organising efforts to bring political attention to gender issues. Confusing autonomous women's movements – just one strategy – with all feminist organising may obscure this continuing vitality whenever opportunity structures encourage embedded over autonomous feminist organising.

This may be true of the current moment. Economic crises brought on by neoliberal globalisation, democratic openings in political systems, and changing willingness among male activists to acknowledge gender issues all draw contemporary feminist organisers to work within multi-issue groups.<sup>88</sup> Movements critical of globalisation, such as the World Social Forum, tap feminist energies, but when these campaigns fail to prioritize gender issues, feminists may return to autonomous organising.<sup>89</sup> Protest demonstrations have also lost their novelty, so ever higher numbers are needed to draw even minimal media attention, while more feminists are sitting in parliaments, doing the work of the movement in professional jobs in academia, government, and business, and networking both online and

off. Such organising is not itself newsworthy, but the issues insiders raise draw media attention, give both antifeminist and feminist perspectives an airing, and further denaturalise patriarchal assumptions. The very pervasiveness of feminist rhetoric sometimes makes it less noticeable, sometimes opens it up to misappropriation.

Much feminist organising is today hidden in plain sight. Across all regions, feminism remains a contested, often stigmatised, term, so feminist organising is paradoxically a global force that rarely names itself as such. Around the world, transnational organisations focused on feminist issues are less likely to use the word ‘feminist’ than to describe their concerns as ‘women’s rights’, ‘gender policy’ or ‘social justice’.<sup>90</sup> Much of the work of the women’s movement is embedded in other movements, in organisations, and in the state, but much feminist organising floats free in the loose institutional structures of civil society.

In sum, feminist organising responds to both the inherent intersectionality among race, class, gender and sexualities and the priorities of its social context. Feminist organising strategies shift between autonomy and embeddedness, emphasising autonomy when gender concerns are ignored or trivialised by other movements, and embeddedness when they are more welcomed and supported. Inclusive solidarity (seeking common ground across difference) is a political choice, as is exclusive solidarity (likeness as a basis for common efforts), not only for feminist movements but for all social justice organising efforts. The exclusive gender solidarity constructed in choosing autonomy as a women’s movement strategy is a poor measure of feminist vitality, not only because it undervalues the diversity that has always characterised feminist organising, but also because the transformations that

feminist organising have already produced offer enhanced opportunities to cooperate in struggles for intersectional social justice.

Placing the heyday of feminism in the 1970s is a dangerous myth. It ignores authentic change in gender relations, limits feminism to only some places in the globe, and celebrates a time when there were so few feminists (and so much ridicule) that nearly all were driven to the streets. Feminist organising today is more global, more vital and more transformative. Feminist organising builds on what has been accomplished, but also stimulates important debates over strategies, allies and effectiveness both in transnational networks and at the grassroots. Feminist organising around the globe varies in timing and emphasis by region, takes advantages of opportunities that open intermittently, builds engagement by women and even men in varying forms over the life course, transmits values across generations, and increasingly appreciates the plurality of local feminist paths. Feminist organising today rests on the commitment of many more individual feminists and on far more organisational resources than feminists of the 1920s or 1970s could have imagined. Feminist organising continues; its heyday may yet come, but certainly has not yet passed.

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<sup>1</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of women*, p. 48. See also Hewitt, *No permanent waves*.

<sup>2</sup> Offen, *Surveying European women's history since the millennium*.

<sup>3</sup> Leavitt and Merry, 'Vernacularization on the ground'.

<sup>4</sup> Ackelsberg, *Free women of Spain*; Guglielmo, 'Transnational feminism's radical past'; Hewitt, 'Re-rooting American women's activism'; Kanter, *Commitment and community*;

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Lavrin, *Women, feminism and social change in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, 1890-1940*;

Molyneux, 'No god, no boss, no husband'.

<sup>5</sup> Chafetz, Dworkin and Swanson, *FemalerRevolt*; Zimmerman, 'The Challenge of multinational empire for the international women's movement'.

<sup>6</sup> Hewitt, 'Re-rooting American women's activism', p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Grimshaw, 'Settler anxieties, Indigenous peoples, and women's suffrage'; Hammar, 'From Fredrika Bremer to Ellen Key'.

<sup>8</sup> Burton, *Burdens of history*; Sneider, *Suffragists in an imperial age*.

<sup>9</sup> Offen, *European feminisms, 1700-1950*.

<sup>10</sup> Badran, *Feminists, Islam and nation*; DuBois, 'Woman suffrage around the world'; Jayawardena, *Feminism and nationalism in the Third World*; Miller, *Latin American women and the search for social justice*; Rupp, *Worlds of women*.

<sup>11</sup> Offen, *European feminisms, 1700-1950*, Rupp, 'Challenging Imperialism in International Women's Organizations 1888-1945'.

<sup>12</sup> Giddings, *When and where I enter*, p. 128.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmed, 'Western ethnocentrism and perceptions of the harem'.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, *Feminism and motherhood in Western Europe, 1890-1970*; Hammar, 'From Fredrika Bremer to Ellen Key'.

<sup>15</sup> For Germany in the 1920s, see Ferree, *Varieties of feminism*, Chapter 2; Trimberger, 'Greenwich Village, 1900-1925'.

<sup>16</sup> Laslett and Brenner, 'Gender and social reproduction'.

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<sup>17</sup> Gullett, 'Constructing the woman citizen'; McCammon, Hewitt and Smith, 'No weapon save argument'; Guy, *Women build the welfare state*; Koven and Michel, *Mothers of a new world*; Skocpol, *Protecting soldiers and mothers*.

<sup>18</sup> Baldez and Kirk, 'Gendered opportunities'; Gonzalez, 'Agitating for their rights'; Lavrin, *Women, feminism and social change in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay*.

<sup>19</sup> For labor legislation and married women's status, see Berkovitch, *From motherhood to citizenship* and DuBois, 'Internationalising married women's nationality'; for divorce and child custody, see Allen, *Feminism and motherhood in Western Europe*; for jury service, see McCammon, *U.S. jury movements*.

<sup>20</sup> Foster, *Women for all seasons*; Rupp, *Worlds of women*.

<sup>21</sup> Giddings, *When and where I enter*, pp. 97–8; Gray White, *Too heavy a load*, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> Cott, *The grounding of modern feminism*; Purkayastha and Subramaniam, *The power of women's informal networks*.

<sup>23</sup> Ferree and Mueller, 'Feminism and the women's movement'.

<sup>24</sup> Ferree and Hess, *Controversy and coalition*.

<sup>25</sup> Jakobsen, *Working alliances and the politics of difference*.

<sup>26</sup> Cobble, *The other women's movement*.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, *Personal politics*; B. Roth, *Separate roads to feminism*; Thompson, 'Multiracial feminism'.

<sup>28</sup> Hull, Scott and Smith, *All the women are white, and All the blacks are men, but some of us are brave*; Ladner, *Tomorrow's tomorrow*.

<sup>29</sup> Dworkin, *Intercourse*; MacKinnon, *Only words*.

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- <sup>30</sup> Echols, *Daring to be bad*; Enke, *Finding a movement*; Rupp and Taylor, 'Women's culture and lesbian feminist activism'.
- <sup>31</sup> Rowe-Finkbeiner, *The F-word: Feminism in jeopardy*, p. 6.
- <sup>32</sup> Beal, 'Double jeopardy'; Combahee River Collective, 'A Black feminist statement'; Hill Collins, *Black feminist thought*.
- <sup>33</sup> Choo and Ferree, 'Practicing intersectionality in sociological research'; Hancock, 'When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition'; McCall, 'The complexity of intersectionality'.
- <sup>34</sup> Yuval-Davis, 'Intersectionality and feminist politics'.
- <sup>35</sup> Alvarez et al., 'Encountering Latin American and Caribbean feminisms'; Sternbach et al., 'Feminisms in Latin America'.
- <sup>36</sup> Narayan, *Dislocating cultures*; Tripp, 'The evolution of transnational feminisms'.
- <sup>37</sup> Jakobsen, *Working alliances and the politics of difference*; Twine and Blee, *Feminism and antiracism*; Weigman, 'Feminism, institutionalism and the idiom of failure'.
- <sup>38</sup> Della Porta and Diani, *Social movements*; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, *Comparative perspectives on social movements*.
- <sup>39</sup> Cummings, VanDam and Valk, *Women's information services and networks*; Friedman, 'Gendering the agenda'; Zinsser 'From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi'.
- <sup>40</sup> Bunch, 'International networking for women's human rights'; Petchesky, 'From population control to reproductive rights'; Snyder, 'Unlikely godmother'.
- <sup>41</sup> Bose and Kim, *Global gender issues*; Runyan and Peterson, 'The radical future of realism'.
- <sup>42</sup> Moghadam, *Globalizing women*; Rai, *The gender politics of development*.



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- <sup>43</sup> Hassim, *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa*; Ranchod-Nilsson, 'Gender politics and the pendulum of political and social transformation in Zimbabwe'; Seidman, "'No freedom without the women'" and 'Gendered citizenship'.
- <sup>44</sup> Geisler, 'Troubled sisterhood'; Tripp, *African women's movements*.
- <sup>45</sup> Heumann, *Sexual politics and regime transition*; Kampwirth, *Women and guerrilla movements* and *Feminism and the legacy of revolution*; Shayne, *The revolution question*.
- <sup>46</sup> Alvarez, *Engendering democracy in Brazil*; Baldez, *Why women protest*; Jaquette, *The women's movement in Latin America*.
- <sup>47</sup> Blofield, *The politics of moral sin*; Franceschet, *Women and politics in Chile*; Haas, *Feminist policy making in Chile*; Htun, *Sex and the state*.
- <sup>48</sup> Einhorn, *Cinderella goes to market*; Funk and Mueller, *Gender politics and Post-communism*; Gal and Kligman, *The politics of gender after socialism*; Jaquette and Wolchik 'Women and democratization in Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe'; Waylen, *Engendering transitions*.
- <sup>49</sup> Roth, *Gender politics in the expanding European Union*; Zippel, 'Transnational advocacy networks and policy cycles in the European Union'.
- <sup>50</sup> Nam, 'Gender politics in the Korean transition to democracy'; Moon, 'Carving out a space'.
- <sup>51</sup> Subramaniam, *The power of women's organizing*.
- <sup>52</sup> Liu, 'When do national movements adopt or reject international agendas?'; Zheng and Zhang, 'Global concepts, local practices'.
- <sup>53</sup> Katzenstein, *Faithful and fearless*.

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- <sup>54</sup> Franceschet, *Women and politics in Chile*; Sternbach et al., “Feminisms in Latin America”; Vargas, *Como cambiar el mundo sin perdernos*.
- <sup>55</sup> Ferree, *Varieties of feminism*; Bernstein, ‘Celebration and suppression’.
- <sup>56</sup> Martin, *Rape work*, pp. 102–4 .
- <sup>57</sup> Alvarez, ‘Advocating feminism’; Lang, ‘The NGOization of feminism’.
- <sup>58</sup> Bagic, ‘Women’s organizing in post-Yugoslav countries’; Thayer, *Making transnational feminism*.
- <sup>59</sup> Clemens and Cook ‘Politics and institutionalism’.
- <sup>60</sup> Alvarez, ‘Beyond NGOization?’; Markovitz and Tice, ‘Paradoxes of professionalization’.
- <sup>61</sup> Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders*.
- <sup>62</sup> Zippel, *The politics of sexual harassment*; Alfredson, *Creating human rights*; Maddison and Jung, ‘Autonomy and engagement’.
- <sup>63</sup> Alvarez, ‘Beyond NGOization?’; Markovitz and Tice, ‘Paradoxes of professionalization’; Ferree and Mueller, ‘Feminism and women’s movements’; Zippel, *Politics of sexual harassment*.
- <sup>64</sup> Alvarez, ‘Advocating feminism’; Hemment, *Empowering women in Russia*; Lang, ‘The NGOization of feminism’; Naples, *Community activism and feminist politics*.
- <sup>65</sup> Ewig, ‘The strengths and limits of the NGO women’s movement model’; Murdock, *When women have wings*; Thayer, *Making transnational feminism*.
- <sup>66</sup> Dufour, Masson and Caouette, *Solidarities beyond borders*; Hercus, *Stepping out of line*; Ryan, *Feminism and the women’s movement*; Staggenborg and Taylor, ‘Whatever happened to the women’s movement?’
- <sup>67</sup> McBride and Mazur, *The politics of state feminism*.

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- <sup>68</sup> Ewig, 'Hijacking global feminism'; Lycklama à Nijeholt, Sweibel and Vargas, 'The global institutional framework'; Woodward, 'Building velvet triangles'.
- <sup>69</sup> Rai, *The gender politics of development*, p. 74.
- <sup>70</sup> Walby's *The future of feminism* takes an optimistic view; Cornwall and Molyneux, *The politics of rights*, is a more pessimistic prognosis.
- <sup>71</sup> Liu, 'When do national movements adopt or reject international agendas?'
- <sup>72</sup> Rebecca Walker, literally the daughter of US feminist activist Alice Walker, coined the phrase in the early 1990s. See "'Becoming the Third Wave' from *Ms. Magazine*.'
- <sup>73</sup> Graff, 'A different chronology.'
- <sup>74</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*; Henry, *Not my mother's sister*; Walker, *To be real*.
- <sup>75</sup> See also Henry, *Not my mother's sister*; Scanlon, 'Sexy from the start' p. 127; Showden, 'What's political about new feminisms?' p. 180.
- <sup>76</sup> Weigman, "Feminism, institutionalism and the idiom of failure."
- <sup>77</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*; Henry, *Not my mother's sister*; Heywood, *The women's movement today*.
- <sup>78</sup> Snyder, 'What is Third Wave feminism?'; Scanlon 'Sexy from the start'; Showden, 'What's political about new feminisms?'
- <sup>79</sup> Bumiller, *In an abusive state*; Eisenstein, *Feminism seduced*.
- <sup>80</sup> Fraser, 'Feminism, capitalism and the cunning of history'.
- <sup>81</sup> Monasterios, 'Bolivian Women's Organizations in the MAS era'.

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<sup>82</sup> Boxer, ‘Rethinking the socialist construction and international career of the concept ‘Bourgeois Feminism’’; Walby, *The future of feminism*; Weigman, ‘Feminism, institutionalism and the idiom of failure’.

<sup>83</sup> Funk and Mueller, *Gender politics and post-communism*; Liu, ‘When do national movements adopt or reject international agendas?’; Sperling, *Organizing women in contemporary Russia*.

<sup>84</sup> Abu-Lughod, ‘Do Muslim women really need saving?’; Cloud, ‘To veil the threat of terror’; Sjoberg, *Gender justice and the wars in Iraq*.

<sup>85</sup> Keating, Rasmussen and Rishi, ‘The rationality of empowerment’ address microenterprise; Ertürk, ‘Turkey’s modern paradoxes’ and Rottmann and Ferree, ‘Citizenship and intersectionality’ engage the feminist politics of veiling; Agustin, *Sex at the Margins*, and Outshoorn, *The politics of prostitution* debate sex work.

<sup>86</sup> von Wahl, ‘From family to reconciliation policy’; Khurshid, *Globalization, women’s education and Islamic traditions of modernity*.

<sup>87</sup> Berkovich, *From motherhood to citizenship*; Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond borders*; Moghadam, *Globalizing women*; Towns, *Women and states*; True and Mintrom, ‘Transnational networks and policy diffusion’.

<sup>88</sup> Jakobsen, *Working alliances and the politics of difference*; Naples, *Community activism and feminist politics*; Thayer, *Making transnational feminism*.

<sup>89</sup> Desai, *Gender and the politics of possibilities*; Marchand, “Challenging globalization.”

<sup>90</sup> Ferree and Pudrovska, ‘Global activism in ‘virtual space’’; Walby, *The future of feminism*.