Opening a Political Opportunity for Women in China

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Currently, feminist activists in China face significant political and cultural barriers to achieving gender equality. These activists require that a political opportunity develop allowing them fundamentally alter the barriers impeding their progress. In this essay, I examine the works of several prominent feminist theorists to cultivate a solution for this problem and apply these findings to the current political and social contexts of China. I propose that a unification of global feminism, transnational feminism, and local feminism is a necessity to properly develop the political opportunity window in China. Transnational feminism must act as a bridge between the isolated local feminists within the country and the academic-based constituency of global feminism. Transnational activists have to integrate the teachings of global feminists theorists into their efforts to aid the Chinese feminists. This methodological framework unites global feminists theories, intersectional analysis, human rights framing, and mobilizing structures to bolster the influence of women's activists in China, despite oppressive conditions. Finally, I examine several alternative theoretical perspectives and explain why each was not utilized or is not applicable to this situation.

INTRODUCTION

The current political and cultural state of China reveals that no political opportunity exists for the advancement of gender equality in the country, especially in regards to women's political participation. These women are "subject to pressure, harassment and intimidation...fed by the fear that the rebellious spirit of the Middle East and Mediterranean countries may spread to China" (Kristeva, 2011). The single-party control system, the authoritarian government, the lack of democratic elections, the prevalence of laws reinforcing the "secondary citizen" status of women, the pervading cultural norms and beliefs regarding the role of women in society, and the economic disadvantage rampant throughout the country all conspire to maintain the subjugation of women in every aspect of society. These factors are significant barriers to generating substantial change in the community.

Despite extremely discouraging cultural and political barriers preventing significant progress for women's political participation in China, a political opportunity for enacting change could arise. This opportunity would be delicate, with even the slightest setback resulting in the window closing rapidly; however, examining China's current political and cultural climate through the theoretical perspectives of the several feminist theories indicates the possibility for cultivating a political opportunity for meaningful, enduring feminist activity.

Based in the global feminism perspective provided by Brooke Ackerly and Katy Attanasi (2009), an intersectional analysis of the current Chinese political and social structure is the greatest resource for identifying the sources of a political opportunity within the country. Allison Symington's (2004) approach to intersectionality combined with several considerations placed forth by both Brooke Ackerly and Rose McDermott (2012) and Myra Marx Ferree (2008), is the most appropriate view for this circumstance. Focusing this intersectional analysis through a human rights lens, as explained by Charlotte Bunch (1990), is the optimal frame to compel social and political changes. Meanwhile, Jutta Joachim (2003) provides a methodological framework for the framing of "problems, solutions, and justifications for political action" (247) and for the construction of political opportunities; Ferree (2008) then offers a particular strategy for framing these arguments in the form of discursive politics. Moreover, Joachim (2003) and Elisabeth Jay Friedman (2007) discuss the methods of alliance building and networking among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their relevance to creating a political opportunity. Taking this multi-level approach towards stimulating a political opportunity offers the most effective and enduring results, even in the most repressive of circumstances.

Nevertheless, activists groups must address several significant theoretical issues from Kate Nash (2002), Elora Chowdhury (2009), and Rosa-

lind Petchesky (2003). By ignoring these theorists' arguments, feminists risk falling directly into the traps which these women are begging them to avoid. However, addressing the concerns of these other theorists does not mean acquiescing to their perspectives or going through extreme lengths to elude the pitfalls each woman forewarned. Activist groups, especially those operating in China, should understand the threats and missteps posed in each of these women's arguments and take appropriate action when necessary to avert the disastrous consequences of these hazards. If feminist activists in China can accomplish this feat while maintaining adherence to the methodological framework provided by the various theorists mentioned earlier, a strong political opportunity window will present itself in due time. And once the opportunity arises, activists need only step through the window to claim significant, impactful progress for women's equality in China, particularly in the arena of women's political participation.

GLOBAL FEMINISM

Brooke Ackerly and Katy Attanasi (2009) define global feminism as "the study of feminisms from around the world and the world around each of us, of local feminisms, of feminisms transnationally, and of global politics through feminist lenses" (546). They name it "a synthetic feminism that draws into relation feminisms that are sometimes in tension with each other, sometimes seemingly working at cross purposes" (Ackerly &Attanasi, 2009, 548); however, their utilizing the term "global feminism" instead of its plural version "reminds us and others of the centrality of difference for the meaning of global feminism" (Ackerly &Attanasi, 2009, 546).

Ackerly and Attanasi (2009) examine the concept of global feminism as a theoretical view to a methodological approach. The theoretical view is that "[global] justice needs a form of feminism that holds in relation various strands of feminism" (Ackerly &Attanasi, 2009,543) Global feminism does not seek to rectify differences in context, even when they disagree, but rather seeks to hold these contexts in "dynamic relationship" (Ackerly &Attanasi, 2009, 543). This concept of relating various, possibly contentious contexts of feminism to one another without attempting to resolve them with "hegemonic meta-narratives" (Ackerly &Attanasi, 543) is very important in the realm of women's political participation because this issue of feminism is possibly the most contextually-based issue. In each country, vastly

different yet equally powerful barriers exist to impede the progress of women's political participation. For example, in China, the non-democratic government and one-party system greatly hampers the ability of women to reach high-ranking government offices; however, in the United States, women still face the same failure to consistently reach the highest offices of government despite having a democratic government and two party state. These are two highly different contexts leading to the same result: a lack of women holding high-level government offices. Since the 1970's, the number of female delegates in the National People's Congress of China has stagnated around 21 percent, which is approximately the same number of women who comprised the Communist Party membership in 2009 (Mong, 2011). While seemingly offering contradictions regarding the utility of a democratic society in promoting women's political participation, global feminism encourages observers to avoid attempting to rectify these differences through a universal standard and accept that the challenges facing each group of women in these countries are different, requiring differing methods of attack to enact change.

The methodological approach offered in global feminism is reflected in the conclusion of the previous example; feminists should view each form of feminism within its own contexts. This is imperative because these everyday contexts hold "the most powerful forms of injustice" (Ackerly &Attanasi, 2009, 543). Moreover, global feminists understand that the analysis of one situation in time is not productive since the relationships between these contexts are dynamic. Exploring, while respecting, these differences in context are the primary goals of global feminism because this leads directly to the uncovering of several mechanisms of inequality. The most powerful tool for uncovering the injustice embedded in the contexts of daily life is intersectionality.

INTERSECTIONALITY

An intersectional approach that corresponds with the understanding of global feminism mentioned earlier is essential for the propagation of a political opportunity window for feminist activists. Allison Symington's (2004) approach to intersectionality, along with some principles provided by Brooke Ackerly and Rose McDermott's (2012) and Myra Marx Ferree's (2008) approaches to intersectionality, accomplishes the primary goal of Ackerly and Attanasi's (2009) global feminism

in holding contexts as dynamic and unveiling the day-to-day contexts which are the basis for social injustice. The unison of this intersectional analysis with the overarching concept of global feminism offers the theoretical and methodological techniques necessary to expose hidden structures of injustice and inequality within any local context across the world. This concept of comparing local contexts on a global scale to fully diagnose the innate and invisible power structures of discrimination within an individual local context is paramount for opening a window of political opportunity in China.

Symington (2004) describes intersectionality as "a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy development that addresses multiple discriminations and helps us understand how different sets of identities impact on access to rights and opportunities" (1). As an analytical tool, intersectionality aids feminists in "studying, understanding, and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with the other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege" (Symington, 2004, 1). The particular power of intersectionality according to Ackerly and McDermott (2012) is its "potential to enable us to see forces at work, not merely the categories of humans on which they work (though it does that too)" (2). They describe these forces as "a range of political contexts in which groups and their politics become marginalized" (2) ; intersectionality has the "analytical potential not only to examine [these forces] but also to understand how the political processes by which their politics become invisible often remain invisible themselves" (3). In returning to the overarching feminist perspective of global feminism, these political processes are the day-to-day contexts' structures which hide the "most powerful forces of injustice" (Ackerly &Attanasi, 2009, 543). Moreover, intersectional analysis functions "to identify practices that fit into patterns of discrimination and distinguish these from things that are idiosyncratic about the actor or community (Symington, 2004, 4). This hinders global feminists from accidently misattributing cultural phenomena and other benign contextual structures as discriminatory in nature when the structures are merely being co-opted for the use of discrimination by greater political forces.

However, Myra Marx Ferree (2008) desires feminists to understand that intersectionality is not a static concept; taking snapshots in time of intersections of discrimination will not fully explain the depth and nature of intersectional discrimination and these invisible

power structures. She believes "this locational approach [to intersectionality] may also encourage what Martinez called the 'Oppression Olympics', in which each group contends for attention and respect for the distinctiveness and importance of their unique location" (Martinez, 1993; Hancock, 2007 via Ferree, 2008, 86-87). Having a contest to determine which group is the most oppressed does not result in any positive gains for all groups involved; while the groups are busy deciding which of them is the most oppressed, the structures of oppression remain in place and gain strength from their internal conflicts. Therefore, to alleviate these concerns, Ferree (2008) proposes "a more dynamic and institutional understanding of intersectionality....this approach sees the dimensions of inequality themselves as dynamic and in changing, mutually constituted *relationships* with each other, from which they cannot be disentangled" (Walby, 2007 via Ferree, 2008, 87). Adding this dynamic dimension to intersectionality further intertwines it with global feminism, which also boasts a dynamic nature.

Intersectionality is the perfect tool when utilizing a global feminist perspective on matters of social injustice. Ackerly and McDermott (2012) concur with this sentiment, "As this work illustrates, intersectional analysis is a linchpin feminist tool that connects the study of newly visible struggles to the insights we have learned from prior analysis of *other formerly invisible struggles*" (3).

FRAMING THE INEQUALITY

Identifying the invisible struggles and social injustices facing women's equality around the world is important; however, drawing attention to these struggles comprises the majority of transnational feminist activism. Jutta Joachim (2003) provides a sound methodological framework for NGOs "to influence state's interests" (247); she states that "framing problems, solutions, and justifications for political action" (247) is key in this matter. Framing "[renders] events or occurrences meaningful," and "[functions] to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (Joachim, 2003, 250). The challenge facing NGOs, especially feminist NGOs whose goals and frames "frequently contradict and compete with the frames of other actors," is "to 'align' or 'extend' their issue frame in such a way that it 'resonates' with the experiences and the empirical context of the targeted audience" (Joachim, 2003, 251). The most frequently

utilized frame for feminist activists is the human rights lens; this frame claims that women's rights are just another facet of human rights and should be treated as such. AWID, a feminist transnational organization with ties to Chinese activism, vehemently promotes the frame of women's human rights; the self-stated, primary agenda of the organization is "achieving gender equality, sustainable development, and women's human rights" (AWID, 2008). This frame extension bridges the somewhat controversial concept of women's rights with the universally-accepted notion of human rights; the desired effect is increased attentiveness to and enforcement of women's rights through the view that these rights violations are tantamount to human rights violations.

Myra Marx Ferree (2008) furthers the importance and understanding of framing and its relationship to intersectional analysis. She notes that since "frames are not isolated concepts, but connections to other concepts that provide meanings of words-in-use, framing is relational and intersectional" (Ferree, 2008, 90). Moreover, the entire "point of frames is that they draw connections, identify relationships and create perceptions of social order out of the variety of possible mental representations of reality swirling around social actors" (Ferree, 2008, 89). However, the "relationship or connection, not the individual element, is the key unit for framing work" (Ferree, 2008, 89). In other words, the power of the connection made through framing lies not in the element being framed, but rather in the manner in which that element is being linked with the greater element. These frames have the ability to drastically change the political opportunity structure in any situation, making altering "the frameworks in which politics gets done...simultaneously an end of social movement activity and the means by which social movement actors attempt to reach their other objectives" (Ferree, 2008, 90). Manipulating the political frameworks is clearly a type of women's political participation; therefore, women's political participation is both a goal of transnational activists and a means to reaching their ends.

The Human Rights Lens

In the battle for women's rights, NGOs all over the world utilize the human rights lens as their strategy in framing discussions over the validity of women's rights. According to Charlotte Bunch (1990), "the concept of human rights is one of the few moral vi-

sions subscribed to internationally" (4), increasing the effectiveness of viewing women's rights through this lens. She notes that even though the "scope [of human rights] is not universally agreed upon, it strikes deep chords of response among many" (Bunch, 1990, 4). This strong emotional response is important because, as mentioned earlier, the power of framing lies within the relationship created between the elements rather than the elements themselves. Moreover, "[promotion] of human rights is a widely accepted goal" (Bunch, 1990, 4) which means that once the frame bridge is created, the promotion of women's rights as a subset of human rights will become a greater goal as well. However, for the framing to reach every section of the globe, transnational activism is essential; this transformation cannot take place solely in the United Nations or on the international level. For the benefits of human rights to fully extend to women's rights, transnational activists, such as AWID, must spread the framing all over the world. AWID choosing to base their entire existence on the lens of "women's human rights" falls directly under Bunch's (1990) strategy of "Feminist Transformation of Human Rights" (14) which involves renovating human rights "so that it will take a greater account of women's lives" (14). This tactic has a tendency to focus on the abuses of women; however, that tendency is beneficial for promoting the realization that human rights exceeds merely "state violations of civil and political liberties" (Bunch, 1990, 5).

Ferree (2008) "believes it is useful to consider rights as one of the most centrally located and densely linked ideas in a network of political meanings" (90). Rights should be viewed as a "web of meaning in which more particular frames are being constructed" rather than a "singular 'master frame' that exists outside of or above the web of meaning" (Ferree, 2008, 90.). This concept of rights as part of the greater web of meaning is called "*rights discourse*" which "differs from rights as a master frame in the same way that a dynamically intersectional system differs from a locational understanding of intersectionality" (Ferree, 2008, 90). "Rights talk" focuses on "one or more of the particular connections available to the concept of rights and thus 'stretches it in some particular direction" (Ferree, 2008, 90). Ferree's (2008) concept of viewing rights discourse as a dynamic, dense web that stretches according to the frames with which it is successfully linked echoes the sentiments of Bunch (1990) who sees "human rights, like all vibrant visions, is not static or the

property of any one group; rather its meaning expands as people reconceive of their needs and hopes in relation to it" (4).

For the issue of women's political participation, feminist activist need not stretch the human rights lens very far. Many aspects of gender-based discrimination and violence "is profoundly political...[resulting] from the structural relationships of power, domination, and privilege between men and women in society" (Bunch, 1990, 8). To breakdown these structural relationships, feminists must enroll the aid of transnational feminist organizations to provide the resources necessary to combat these societal structures. Moreover, only examination of this local context through an intersectional lens can uncover the depth and breadth of these women's human rights violations. Many continue to view female subordination "as inevitable or natural, rather than...as a politically constructed reality maintained by patriarchal interests, ideology, and institutions" (Bunch, 1990, 8). To cause change within these institutions, political action must occur. The transnational organizations must initially approach each contexts in the mindset of a global feminist utilizing intersectional analysis to uncover the hidden or invisible power structures of oppression throughout the community; then the activists must begin efforts to network the local activists, frame the injustices in the human rights lens, and provide resources to the local activists.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

When gathering support for their activism, an NGO's success is "contingent on the dynamic interaction of primarily two factors: (1) the political opportunity structure in which NGOs are embedded,...and (2) the mobilizing structures that NGOs have at their disposal" (Joachim, 2003, 247). Joachim specifically calls these two interacting factors dynamic because their composition will change, even slightly, over time. This is an important factor when discussing the current state of activism in China. At present, the political opportunity structure for feminist activists is nearly nonexistent, and the mobilizing structures are scattered and disorganized as a direct result of government oppression. Nevertheless, activists must remember that these conditions will shift over time due to their dynamic nature. Joachim (2003) offers a detailed explanation of the political opportunity structure and the mobilization system in order to aid activists in producing profitable shifts in both factors of support mobilization.

According to Joachim (2003), "the *political opportunity structure* captures the institutional context which imposes obstacles on and provides opportunities for actors engaged in framing processes" (251). Furthermore, "it provides external resources for relatively weak actors to pursue normative change" (Joachim, 2003, 251). The normative changes normally stem from the framing process which is affected by the political opportunity structure in several ways: "(1) it functions as 'gatekeeper', privileging certain frames and marginalizing others; (2) it provides a 'tool kit' for action by providing material and symbolic resources for social actors; and (3) it creates 'windows of opportunities' for action because of its dynamic nature" (Mazey, 2000; Swidler, 1986 via Joachim, 2003, 251). Understanding the effects of the political opportunity structure on activist framing is integral for properly exploiting the "windows of opportunities" of time available for enacting long-term change in a certain context. The more adept a transnational, national, or local organization is at utilizing the political opportunity structure and process framing, the more likely that a window will emerge.

Three facets, "access, allies, political alignments or conflicts" (Joachim, 2003, 251), of the political opportunity system are specifically important. "Symbolic events" are instrumental in gaining access, considered the most important factor for NGOs regarding gaining influence, because "they can 'recast or challenge prevailing definitions of the situation, thus changing perceptions of costs and benefits or policies and programs and the perception of injustice of the status quo'" (Zald, 1996, 268 via Joachim, 2003, 251). Moreover, access is important for enhancing "the chances for winning *influential allies*" (Joachim, 2003, 251). In China, local and transnational NGOs lack significant levels of access to government and politicians, limiting their influential capabilities. This situation is due primarily to the one-party system of China politics, in which nearly the entire national government is comprised of members from the Communist Party of China (Wong, 2013).

Not coincidentally, influential allies comprise the second facet of Joachim's (2003) methodology; they "can amplify and legitimize the frames of NGOs because they posses resources that these non-state actors themselves lack, such as money, institutional privileges, or prestige" (251). For activists in China, gathering support from one influential ally in such a rigid political system will not achieve widespread reform. However, attempting to ally themselves with one of the two co-

alitions developing in the Communist Party of China would significantly increase both the visibility of women's human rights activists and their influence. For the best possible results, local activists in China should begin recruiting allies at the local levels of government while the transnational groups recruit allies in the international community. In an interview with AWID, Cai Yiping, an executive committee member for Develop Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), noted that "both bottom-up and top-down" approaches are important for permeating the exclusive political structure in China (Jones, 2012).

The final aspect of the political opportunity structure is political alignments or conflict. Joachim (2003) notes that "[while] changes in political alignments may bring into power actors whose perspectives and beliefs are more in alignment with the frames advanced by NGOs, conflicts can be fortuitous for NGOs because their frames serve as a bridge for the divided parties" (Tarrow, 1994, 87; Surel, 2000, 501 via Joachim, 2003, 252). Unfortunately, a political alignment which will bring into power allies of the feminist movement is highly unlikely. Although new governmental leaders are urged to adopt more liberal viewpoints than their predecessors (Wong &Ansfield, 2012), the true power lies in the Communist Party of China and its collective leadership. However, a political conflict may be around the corner in regards to the Chinese political system. Several experts agree that while the Communist Party of China is the primary source of political power within the country, there is a deep-rooted, expanding division among the 80 million members of the party along ideological lines (Lai, 2012). This division, which "run along socioeconomic and geographic lines" (Lai, 2012), is a powerful weapon of feminist activists in China because they can utilize this gap to gain a strong foothold in political talks, offering widespread support for the party coalition willing to fight for their cause. However, this possible symbolic event can only come to pass if activists find a method to increase their levels of access to influential political leaders and create allies out of those leaders. In turn, these new alliances will offer feminist activists in China a "window for opportunity" (Joachim, 2003, 251) to enact change.

Mobilization Structure

Despite the prominent factors indicating the possibility of a political opportunity developing within China, the fact remains that feminists activists with the country lack the mobilization structure needed to properly exploit this window. Joachim (2003) defines mobilizing structures as "'those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action'" (McAdam et al., 1996, 3 via Joachim, 2003, 252); "they are networks of NGOs" (252). These networks of NGOs are "capable of engaging in practices aimed at changing the normative context in which they are embedded...[and, specifically, they] can translate opportunities in their institutional context into frames that are considered legitimate, i.e. they can be strategic" (Joachim, 2003, 252). Being the supply of "ideas and mobilizing energy," mobilization structures equip NGOs "not only with people power but also with information and expertise" (Joachim, 2003, 252). These factors make mobilization structures, which are sorely lacking in China due to government intervention, critical for the success of any feminist activist organizations. Joachim (2003) identifies three primary elements of mobilization structures that are important for NGOs while Elisabeth Friedman (2007) provides a strategy for the creation of the mobilization structures under oppressive governments.

The three particularly relevant elements of mobilizing structures are "*organizational entrepreneurs...a heterogeneous international constituency...*[and] *experts*" (Joachim, 2003, 252). Organizational entrepreneurs are integral "because they are individuals or organizations who care enough about an issue to absorb the initial costs of mobilizing, bring with them a wealth of organizing experiences, are well-connected, and have a vision and charisma" (Joachim, 2003, 252). Moreover, they are vital for mobilizing a heterogeneous international constituency, "which comprises people from diverse cultural and political backgrounds" (Joachim, 2003, 252). This constituency contributes legitimacy to certain frames, such as a human rights frame, by minimizing the opponents' claims that the NGO is representing only a certain group's interest, allowing NGOs to exert pressure at various levels utilizing a variety of strategies and tactics, and creating the radical flank effect, in which groups with more moderate views gain bargaining power due to the existence of groups with more radical views (Joachim, 2003). The final aspect of mobilizing structures is experts, defined as "both directly affected individual who can provide testimonies based on their experiences...and 'epistemic communities' consisting of scientists and academics" (Joachim, 2003, 252).

Each of these elements are vital in creating and maintaining a mobilization structure within a state, and each of these elements are sorely lacking in Chinese activism. Firstly, there are no organizational entrepreneurs available to connect the local strands of activism with each other or transnational organizations. Some may claim that the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) serves this purpose adequately; however, the fact that they are a government organized non-governmental organization (GONGO) severely limits the group's effectiveness in this category (Jie, 2006). Moreover, some people studying the NGO community in China argue that the ACWF is an organization utilized by the government specifically to maintain the cultural and political status quo. The fact that the ACWF has posted several articles encouraging young women seeking higher levels of education to cease their work and find a suitable partner for marriage before they become a "leftover" woman contributes heavily to this notion (Fincher, 2012). A "leftover" woman is defined by the ACWF as "unmarried women over the age of 27 and China's Ministry of Education added the term to its official lexicon" (Finch, 2012). Clearly, these articles prohibit the ACWF from being an appropriate mobilization structure for feminist activism in China. Furthermore, the economic disenfranchisement of women debilitates them and their organizations from becoming organizational entrepreneurs themselves. Secondly, the lack of organizational entrepreneurs has prevented local feminist activists from connecting with the larger heterogeneous international constituency, removing the pressure from the international community while limiting the effectiveness of human rights frames utilized by women in the country. And lastly, the isolationist techniques of China's government deny the use of experts for local activists within the country. Without access to research data, other theoretical perspectives, and new strategies and tactics, these activists are left repeating the same frame of women's rights through the same methods of protests without much strong empirical data to support their claims.

Friedman (2007) proposes the use of the internet as a means for these local organizations to not only mobilize with one another, but develop mobilization structures with transnational feminist organizations as well. The technological advancement of the internet allows groups to communicate with one another through social networking sites and various other forms of communication that are extremely difficult for the government to preempt; as a result, the local activists may be able to create their own national mobilization structure while lacking serious support for any national NGOs. According to Friedman (2007), the "internet addresses the central problems impeding the effectiveness of [Latin American] lesbian organizing: isolation, repression, resource restriction, and lack of community cohesion" (791). The challenges Friedman mentions are almost exactly the same challenges facing feminist organizations in China. The physical size of the country fosters isolation among its communities; the government is actively repressive of any NGOs deemed threatening to the current social order. The utilization of the internet offers "a more stable and inexpensive platform for socializing and activism...within and across national boundaries" (Friedman, 2007, 791). In China, this tool could serve as the link between local feminists with one another and transnational feminists since the government controls the national level of feminism. Using the internet, and now social media, permits groups such as AWID to communicate with leaders of the local activists, coordinating strategies and conveying new ideas back and forth. And while the Chinese government does censor the cyber-interactions of its citizens with the international community, it is nearly impossible for the government to control the entire flow of internet and social media throughout the entire country. The most prohibitive issue regarding the use of the internet and other forms of social media is the accessibility to these media for local activist organizations.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWS AND PITFALLS

Several theorists provide alternative views regarding certain issue areas addressed in this model while others warn feminists of dangers inherent with reckless utilization of the tools mentioned earlier. Kate Nash (2002) offers a different perspective on the issue of women's rights as human rights from the one ascribed to here by Charlotte Bunch (1990). Meanwhile, Elora Chowdhury (2009) and Rosalinda Petchesky (2003) warn feminist theorist of common traps into which many fall. The following section addresses both the alternate view of Nash (2002) and the concerns of Chowdhury (2009) and Petchesky (2003).

Nash (2002) believes that human rights discourse is naturally flawed in that the standards for "proving discrimination in court has generally been taken to require a *male* standard of equality" (421). This standard forces women to answer the question of whether

men and women are the same, should only be treated the same, or if women are different and deserve special treatment (Nash, 2002, 421). These questions are the logical conclusion to discussing women's rights as human rights, which are standardized in androcentric terms of equality. To eliminate this male focus from the standardization of human rights, Nash (2002) proposes a concept known as "deconstructive equality" (420); it is "the transformation of social practices such that any sex, gender, or sexual orientation...could be occupied by any individual was always open to contestation and change and was not discriminated against" (421). She notes that deconstructive equality does not ignore sexual differences but "requires ongoing transformation of all aspects of sex, gender, and sexuality in the name of equal treatment" (Nash, 2002, 421). While Nash's (2002) concept of deconstructive equality is powerful, the current applicability of such an approach, especially given the state of women's activism in China, is not constructive. For the purposes of constructing a political opportunity in such an oppressive government and culture, asking potential allies to not only subscribe to the notion of women's human rights but also completely reform the manner in which they conceive human rights is too burdensome on them. Rather than drawing in new allies, this view of human rights may result in a backlash effect with many leaders, mostly males, believing the issue too complex and costly an investment of their political clout to join, leaving women worse off than they were before. Therefore, even though Nash (2002) is correct in her criticism of the current human rights approach taken by many feminist activists, the ability to apply her theoretical framework to the concept is prohibitive for many activists seeking to recruit new, influential allies.

Chowdhury (2009) warns feminists of their inherent desires to view the intersectional analysis of local contexts through a western lens, resulting in the propagation of western thought into eastern contextual circumstances. She identifies the divide between feminists in the academy, global feminists according to this paper, and transnational feminists, organizations such as AWID (Chowdhury, 2009, 54-55). Through this divide, she claims that both global feminism and transnational feminisms are culpable for the hegemonic perpetuation of western ideals in inappropriate contexts (Chowdhury, 2009, 55-56). While Chowdhury (2009) has a valid argument regarding this western imperialistic nature; however, the veracity of this ar-

gument rests in the relations of transnational feminists to national and local level feminist organizations rather than in global feminism. The strongest evidence supporting such a notion comes from the claims of several academic global feminist. Ackerly and Attanasi (2009) specifically claim that global feminism "hold in relation the academic-post modern feminists' concern with 'hegemonic meta-narratives' and the women's rights activists' attempts to get global recognition of the violations of women's rights" (544). Simultaneously, the intersectional analysis view utilized here by Symington (2004) emphasizes the importance of identifying "practices that fit into patterns of discrimination and [distinguishing] these from things that are idiosyncratic about the actor or community" (4). Both of these examples illustrate the insulation of the global feminists from the dangers of western imperialism since they are aware of its existence. However, transnational feminist organizations are at risk from this imperialistic view. A conclusion stemming from an AWID conference on women's political participation stated "[it] is possible... to make globalization processes support social justice through democratization of local, national, and international spaces" (AWID, 2008). While this conclusion does not definitively imply that AWID is consistently guilty of imposing western viewpoints on other contexts, the possibility still exists. For this reason, the model developed throughout this paper encouraged the link between global feminism and transnational feminism, both as a method for furthering the strategies and tactics of transnational feminist organizations and as a method for mitigating the possibility of such western imperialism from entrenching itself within the transnational feminist organizations.

Finally, Petchesky (2003) believes that feminists should not advocate for a particular right without making that right the true end. She states based "on such human rights principles, feminists affirm that women's health, pleasure, and empowerment must be treated as ends in themselves and not merely as means towards other social goals" (Petchesky, 2003, 9). While this assertion is not the crux of Petchesky's (2003) work, the issue is important enough to deserve a direct response. Although women's political participation is a means towards achieving the vast variety of other social goals associated with feminism, many groups discuss this political participation as an end as well. For example, AWID has devoted an entire section of its website to "calls for participation" (AWID, 2008) in which mem-

bers and non-members alike can read various protests and other forms of activism occurring across the globe. These activities are not differentiated nor segregated, the only requirement being that the movement promote a feminist goal of some kind. Clearly, these calls for participation demonstrate the goal of feminist organizations is not merely to encourage political participation for their own group, but also to encourage participation in the general field of feminism and feminist goals. Therefore, while Petchesky (2003) does provide a significant issue regarding the nature of certain rights being a means rather than an end, the current level of technological integration and networking among feminist NGOs and other NGOs implicitly sharing feminist goals or ideals almost assures that this qualm is not overlooked.

CONCLUSION

A cursory glance over the current contexts of Chinese activism indicate that a political opportunity is far for manifesting. Like all countries, the political and social climate of China is dynamic, continuously shifting to open and close windows of action for social groups. Despite the best efforts of Chinese governmental leaders, the universal conceptions of women's rights are solidifying a foothold within the country. As turmoil within the party develops, these windows for change, the political opportunities, will open; and feminist NGOs within the country must be prepared to act.

The unification of global feminist principles, as suggested by Ackerly and Attanasi (2009), and Symington's (2004) intersectional analysis offer the theoretical framework for tackling a political climate as restrictive as the Chinese climate. Meanwhile, Bunch's (1990) human rights frame in Ferree's (2008) discursive politics model provides the practical source for coercing lasting change within the Chinese political context. Furthermore, mobilization structure building, as outlined by Joachim (2003) and Friedman (2007), imparts feminist NGOs with the necessary tools to swiftly affect change when the political opportunity in China arises. So long as feminists activists avoid the pitfalls introduced by Nash (2002), Chowdhury (2009), and Petchesky (2003), their efforts will result in an enduring, impactful transformation within their local and national communities. This cohesive methodological framework, composed from the insights of several accomplished theorists in the field of feminism, provides a possible blueprint for obtaining substantial change in

a repressive context, especially in the area of women's political participation.

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