

Advancing Women in Leadership Journal

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Researchers note that to improve the climate for academic women, institutional leaders must become change agents (Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, & Uzzi, 2000; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Valian, 1998). Although some institutional leaders may be willing to pursue strategies to benefit academic women, not all leaders are so altruistic nor are they able to see past their own privilege. As such, the strategies of academic women, both individually, and as this study emphasizes, collectively, are instrumental in trying to create an equitable academic climate. For this study, I was interested in the organizations that are both feminist and activist. In part, I was interested in them because they helped bring about changes that continue to improve the climate in academe for women.

Evidence that campuses are becoming more inclusive of women includes the fact that women are actively participating in higher education now more than ever before. More than 50 percent of all undergraduate students are female. In addition, the numbers of female graduate, professional, and doctoral recipients and faculty are increasing (Chronicle, 2003). Over 700 campuses house Women's Studies programs or departments (Thorne, 2000) and many campuses house women's centers and other resources for women. However, the existence of these organizations suggests that while the climate may have improved for some women in recent years, there are still concerns that need to be addressed and there are women who want to mobilize as a result.

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that networks of feminist faculty women use to improve the climate for women on their campuses. To do so, I presented a review of the literature that examines the nature of activism among women in the academy. This scholarly framework reinforced the need to additional research, like this study, to better understand how courageous academics mobilize and work for an equitable campus climate. By analyzing interviews, documents, and observations of meetings, I was able to get a richer picture of how two feminist faculty organizations advance their activist agendas. The stories that emerged from the data told two related, but differing stories of how academic women pursued their activist goals. In addition, their stories provided meaningful examples for other successful academic women who want to improve the climate for women on their own campuses and suggested that there is still more to be learned about the nature of activist work in the academy.

A diverse conceptual framework supported my research question and inquiry. Three theoretical perspectives interwove to form the fabric of my literature review, design, and analysis. Because I was interested in women as subjects and believed that power within the academy is primarily patriarchal, I

explored this study from a feminist perspective. Moreover, for this study, faculty and faculty work were central; therefore, professionalization theory also informed my research. Finally, the connection of activist faculty women to the Women's Movement, and the potential for organizational change, influenced by activism, called for inclusion of the social movement literature.

My review of the literature is embedded in the theoretical frameworks described above and focused on the mechanisms women faculty have pursued to transform higher education. Specifically, I explored the scholarship on the activist strategies in which they engage.

Many researchers have focused on strategies that individual academic women have pursued to create a more equitable campus community (Astin & Leland, 1991; Caplan, 1994; Garner, 1996; Valian, 1998; Theodore, 1986). Often these strategies are embedded in liberal feminist efforts to better the situation for one woman or a small group of women within the existing institutional structure. For example, Garner (1996), Valian (1998), and Glazer-Raymo (1999, 2000) advocated that women consider serving on committees that shape policy for women, assume administrative positions, or become members of a college or university board of trustees or regents.

Theodore (1986), in her study of 470 academic women protesters, shared multiple stories of women who used institutional grievance procedures or filed complaints with government agencies, including seeking legal action in the courts. She also shared the experiences of women who have resigned from their own academic or administrative position or refused to be considered for a promotion because they disagreed with an institutional decision or policy (Theodore, 1986). However, Theodore's (1986) study found that these predominantly isolated efforts of academic women in the 1970s and 1980s experienced little success. Instead, "campus troublemakers," as she called them, were faced with sexism in the grievance and legal systems; red tape; inaction; lies; lack of financial, psychological, and social support, including reluctant unions; and often faced retaliation from colleagues and administrators (Theodore, 1986).

Although scholars described strategies to foster institutional change that center on the efforts of an individual academic woman rather than on collective action (Astin & Leland, 1991; Caplan, 1994; Garner, 1996; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2000), many of the tactics described or suggested can be pursued either individually, by an individual who is a member of a network, or collectively. Ultimately, to improve the institutional climate for the next generation of women, academic women must anticipate, confront, and address expectations that limit the advancement of women (Glazer-Raymo, 2000). To do so, activists should prod search committees to increase the diversity of the applicant pool, work with women outside the institution who can put pressure on the university or college, host and publicize events like speakers and conferences, request that the university president make a public statement that gender discrimination will not be tolerated, and support administrators who are sympathetic to feminist scholarship and inquiry (Astin & Leland, 1991; Caplan, 1994; Garner, 1996; Glazer-Raymo,

1999, 2000).

Other scholars whose work reflects the experiences of faculty activists focus on the power of the collective to transform the academic climate (Baldwin, Blattner, Johnson, Peden, & Shepard, 2000; Childers, Rackin, Secor, & Tracy, 1981; DeSole & Butler, 1994; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Hyer, 1983; O'Leary & Lie, 1990; Smallwood, 2001; Swogger, 2000; Taylor, 1989; Theodore, 1986). Most of the women in Theodore's (1986) study described their activist work as wrought with negative experiences. As such, she learned from the stories of individual protestors that *collective* strength is the best way for a movement to achieve its goals and to be considered a positive experience for those involved. In addition, Theodore (1986) stated that collective action among faculty women can be effective. She also identified strategies that activists can use, including arranging meetings with administrators, writing letters, collecting funds for defense purposes, sponsoring rallies and lectures, and creating petitions and demonstrations (Theodore, 1986).

O'Leary and Lie (1990) referenced Theodore's (1986) study as they categorized the activist strategies of academic women. They indicated that evidence from Theodore's (1986) work helped to shape personal strategies. Further, recommendations from Theodore's findings characterized institutional strategies (O'Leary & Lie, 1990). Institutional strategies were considered the most effective to bring about policy changes that benefit large groups of individuals, accomplished through well-presented, data-driven arguments. Collective action, particularly within Women's Studies programs, has been successful at using data to initiate institutional change (O'Leary & Lie, 1990).

Several scholars have used case studies to describe models of collective action that academic women are encouraged to replicate to transform the institutional culture to one that is more welcoming to women (Baldwin et al., 2000; DeSole & Butler, 1994; Hyer, 1983). These models are very much in line with what O'Leary and Lie (1990) referred to as institutional strategies and are described below.

In her research on the implementation of affirmative action policies in the early 1980s, Hyer (1983) found that faculty women's groups were instrumental in the establishment of such policies, as well as in the creation of other changes for university women. Respondents at CKSU, Denby, and Newton described strategies that their campus women's faculty groups used to foster change. Although one group, and interestingly the least effective of the three, was connected to a union, all three used similar tactics. The groups met with administrators; encouraged the appointment of senior women to administrative posts; wrote position papers, letters, and resolutions; and educated junior faculty about professional issues, like tenure and negotiating the institutional bureaucracy (Hyer, 1983). In the end, the groups tried to raise awareness and affect change, not only around affirmative action, but on salary, childcare, maternity leave, spousal hires, mentoring, and the creation of Women's Studies programs (Hyer, 1983).

To remind academic women that the full participation has not been realized and work still needs to be

done, DeSole and Butler (1994) presented a model of a multidimensional network at the State University of New York, Albany. To frame the need for such a network, they indicated that academic women have been co-opted by partial success. This is to say that academic women who have fought for change and have witnessed some minor improvements interpret these small tokens as achieving equity (DeSole & Butler, 1994). The university drew 14 groups together, comprised of faculty, administrators, and students, whose energies are focused on promoting opportunities and furthering common interests of women at Albany. The interlocking network was loosely managed by the university, unlike some of the other groups previously described, which were more grassroots in origin. However, the strategies of the “Albany Model” were strikingly similar to those grassroots networks. This model network hosts an annual reception for new women faculty and professionals, conducts and analyzes surveys on the climate for women at Albany, publicizes findings in reports and in public forums, and meets with administrators to share results and encourage remedies for documented inequities (DeSole & Butler, 1994).

More recently, the Vice President for Student Affairs formed a collective of faculty, administrators, professional and clerical staff, and students at Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO) to address climate issues for women at the university (Baldwin et al., 2000). It is unclear as to whether the network was established as an administrative mandate of her position or as a grassroots effort in spite of her position. However, the network at SEMO was differentiated from the others discussed in this paper in that it is a chapter of the American Council on Education/National Network (ACE/NET). This affiliation made the organization unique in that it was linked to and supported by a broader national network housed in the ACE Office on Women in Higher Education. Yet, like all other networks studied thus far, the strategies to promote the professional and personal development of women were similar. The network created mentoring programs, provided advocacy for women’s issues, sponsored Women’s History Month programming, published a newsletter and website, and implemented studies on gender. This ACE/NET group also conducted town-gown events (Baldwin et al., 2000), emphasizing the need to create liaisons within the local community, which was a strategy that is not often mentioned in the scholarship on academic activist networks.

Perhaps the most visible activism among faculty in the immediate past has been pursued by part-time and adjunct faculty. Part-time and adjunct faculty are often poorly treated, poorly paid, and lack benefits. They are even referred to as the “migrant workers of the information economy” in the documentary film *Degrees of Shame* (Smallwood, 2001). Further, women comprise this group of faculty more than any other (e.g., assistant, associate, or full professors), making the plight of part-time faculty a gendered issue. While there has been little documentation of academic women’s groups addressing the concerns or trying to improve the conditions of part-time faculty, these contingent faculty (women and men) have engaged in collective action (Smallwood, 2001; Swogger, 2000). Some part-time faculty have unionized, while others, especially in right-to-work states have formed activist

networks to improve their work life conditions (Swogger, 2000). In either case, these faculty activists (again, not all women, as is the focus of the study in which this literature review is embedded) have picketed, generated media coverage, and pressured other institutional unions to support them (Swogger, 2000). Other examples of activist strategies were visible during Campus Equity Week in 2001, sponsored by the American Association of University Professors. Part-time faculty activists constructed a life-sized elephant handing out peanuts with a sign reading, “Will work for peanuts,” and presented guerilla theater skits depicting the situation of adjuncts (Smallwood, 2001).

Of the models described by researchers, only the Women’s Faculty Caucus at Denby, the Women’s Forum at Newton, and the part-time faculty movement were truly grassroots networks that did not have to answer to the institutional hierarchy (Hyer, 1983). However, in the literature reviewed, it was only the recent part-time faculty movement that included nonviolent demonstrations as a strategy. Further, scholars who study feminist networks outside of academe warn that “the master’s tools” (Lourde, 1983, p. 99) will never create genuine change (Faver, 1994). This suggests that the more radical strategies must also be pursued. Those that are part of the daily work of academe (e.g., conducting research, attending committee meetings, meeting with administrators, providing educational seminars) will never be enough (Ropers-Huilman, 2000). In addition, to be successful, feminist networks must create coalitions outside of the institution, as they did at SEMO, to best leverage the network’s power base (Nelson & Johnson, 1991). However, by examining the scholarship on activism among women academics, the sorts of networks that seem to be discussed are those that are perceived as less radical and are embedded in the institutional structure. Does this mean that those sorts of organizations are not part of scholarly discourse because they do not exist? Are there other strategies that feminist faculty organizations use to advance their agendas?

Based upon the review of the literature, there appeared to be a lack of scholarship on activism among collectives of women faculty. As such, I wanted to explore the experiences of feminist activist academic women, self-identified by their involvement in campus grassroots organizations for women faculty, to gain a deeper understanding of how these women succeed in an academy often considered hostile to women. Specifically, the research question I sought to answer was: *How do women faculty in campus-based grassroots feminist organizations construct their activist strategies?*

To clarify, a grassroots activist organization is one that, for the design of this study, is formed and maintained by women faculty to address concerns of and improve the climate for women faculty. Such organizations are not created by boards of trustees or regents, university administrators, or parties outside the institution as those that were described by Baldwin et al. (2000) and DeSole and Butler (1994)—they are constructed and led by women faculty. Further, I define activist strategies as the purposeful methods in which members of an organization engage in order to raise consciousness and foster change.

In order to address my research question, I conducted an exploratory qualitative study. I used a comparative case study design to intensively investigate two feminist faculty organizations at two public Research I universities (referred to in the most recent Carnegie Classification of institutions as Doctoral/Research-Extensive) over the course of an academic semester.

I selected two feminist faculty organizations that serve as the foundation of my study. The first organization was the Association for Women Faculty (AWF) at the University of Arizona (UA). I chose this organization, in part because I was a board member of the AWF at the time of investigation, and therefore, had easy access to all aspects of the organization. Because of my involvement in this organization, I was a participant observer throughout the collection and analysis of the data. For the second case, I selected the Faculty Women's Caucus (FWC) at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL). For comparative purposes, I selected another women's faculty organization at a public, land-grant, Research I institution.

The two settings, the University of Arizona and the University of Nebraska, had several similarities that make them ideal for comparative analysis. They were both public Research I, land-grant, universities and the main campus institution within their state system. In addition, both institutions had a Women's Studies department or program and an active, administratively-supported Commission on the Status of Women. Third, the numbers of instructional faculty at the two institutions were very similar. In 1999, there were 1485 faculty at the University of Arizona, of which 412 were women. For that same time period, the University of Nebraska had 1487 instructional faculty members, among which 453 were women.

For the AWF, I read and coded 23 newsletters (a temporally representative sample from 1983-2000) published by the organization and the organization's constitution and by-laws. I observed six board meetings, a luncheon with the organization and the Board of Regents, and two meetings with the AWF board and university leadership. In addition, using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, I conducted interviews with 11 active AWF board members, six former AWF board members, and the director of Women's Studies at the University of Arizona.

For the FWC, I analyzed 18 documents that included electronic mail messages, meeting agendas, petitions, and letters all initiated by FWC members related to organizational business. The FWC did not meet on a regular basis, but conducted meetings only as issues emerged. However, I was able to observe one meeting related to the work of that organization while I was on campus collecting data. Using purposive and snowball sampling, just as I did with the participants affiliated with the AWF, I conducted interviews with eight active FWC members (including the director of Women's Studies at UNL), and one former FWC member.

After the data were collected, I conducted a cross-case analysis. This analysis allowed me to group perspectives from different data sources to shape the themes that guided my research (Patton, 1990).

By using a variety of field methods (document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observations), I gathered comprehensive, in-depth information about each case and was able to triangulate the findings based on patterns and themes that emerged from multiple data sources.

The interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documents were analyzed and interpreted using the constant comparative approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) looking for convergence and divergence in the data (Patton, 1990). These categories were modified as each data source was analyzed. This process is described by Lincoln and Guba (1986) as the “saturation of categories” or the “emergence of regularities” (p. 350). Comparative pattern analysis was used to illuminate recurring patterns in the data. To accomplish this, I searched for patterns that converged into categories exhibiting “internal homogeneity” and “external heterogeneity” (Patton, 1990, p. 403). Data were analyzed for each case, as well as across cases, in order to identify both similarities and differences among patterns and themes.

In the end, the most powerful patterns and themes that emerged from the data served as the framework for my findings that follow. In addition, I worked closely with a peer research group throughout the process to help me refine my protocols, address issues of bias, and reinforce the salient findings from this study.

The concept of professionalized activism permeated nearly every aspect of the strategies in which the AWF engaged. Unlike strategies that are often recognized as part of social movement activism (e.g., picketing, sit-ins, walk-outs), professionalized activism focuses on tactics that mirror the professional work in academe in order to advance the AWF agenda. From the beginning of the AWF in 1982, many professionalized activist strategies were documented in newsletters, such as: letter writing to the president; meeting with the provost; asking the provost, president, and regents to attend meetings; and forming committees. Meeting with administrators and making them aware of issues, as well as reminding them of past efforts (like recommendations that, to date, remain unmet from a UA study completed in 1988) seemed to be key strategies to foster change.

“What we have done in past generations is to have the subcommittee chairs, if they are working on a certain issue, bring that forward in the meeting with the president.” (Olivia Nelson [AWF], personal communication)

“We have set up our panels to bring people together who have interests in different issues. I think that the meetings with the president and the provost are another way that we do that. Those would be our primary ways. To the extent that our subcommittees have meetings and in addition contact individuals on campus with things we are concerned with, that is kind of how we operate.” (Nora Islip [AWF], personal communication)

“Education, exposure, communication, some of the travel grants and opportunities to help women further their education and their careers [are our main strategies].” (Young [AWF], personal communication)

Creating subcommittees, scheduling meetings, presenting educational seminars, and providing funds for research all reinforced professional academic work. These strategies enhanced the legitimacy of the organization in the eyes of academe, and by engaging in them, the organization also appeared less radical and more friendly to non-feminists. For the AWF, professionalized activism is currently the sole strategy. This is to say, that for the AWF, if a particular strategy didn't result in change, the group found another professionalized way to reinforce its position. As the following quote suggests, instead of looking for a more confrontational strategy, the AWF put forward different people or waited out the administrators and tried to use a professionalized strategy with a different, and perhaps more willing, administrator.

“[If something doesn't work,] I think you do try in a different way. As somebody who has been fighting for change for many many years, I think you try again in a different way. I think different people step forward to try. A lot of it has to do with waiting out administrators. I think that you wait for another day. Come back and maybe it is other people. You keep on trying it from a different angle.” (Claudia Macintosh [AWF], personal communication)

Patience, perseverance, and pragmatism are necessary. Using these tactics, change will likely be slow and incremental, if it comes at all.

Other strategies served to reinforce the AWF's professionalized activism. For example, newsletters report that in the early years of the organization, programs were held annually for women to share their scholarship with one another. While the annual research program was discontinued after about five years, scholarship still had a place in programs (e.g., Dr. Leslie Lawrence presented a paper on gender and retrenchment to the membership in the mid-1990s). By creating an opportunity for faculty to hone their presentation and research skills and speaking to gender-relevant research, the AWF supported women faculty, and at the same time, an academic activity that is consistent with the university's reward structure.

Another way in which the AWF helped faculty in their professional roles was through travel grants. Newsletters documented the application process for faculty and graduate students. This process, not unlike other small academic grant processes, required the submission of a curriculum vitae, a research proposal, evidence as to how the work will benefit the AWF, and a follow-up report about the completed research. Based upon the criteria, it appears that those who will receive grants to travel to a conference or to conduct research are judged by standards similar to academic peer review processes, further evidence of a professionalized activity. While I am referring to these sorts of activities as professionalized activism, many of the strategies are not activist in the traditional sense of the word. The intended goal for many of these efforts is to provide professional opportunities and support for women faculty, not necessarily to transform the institution.

More recent meetings of the AWF showed the desire to reinforce professional legitimacy, critical to

professionalized activism. In a board meeting in February, 2000, the president of the board reaffirmed her position about a proposed interdisciplinary program in early childhood development, asserting that, “as faculty, I can’t support this; it is educational malpractice.” (Wanda Solidad, AWF). The *educational malpractice* to which she was referring was that the program was proposed by an administrator with a master’s degree and an adjunct faculty member—not tenure-track faculty with Ph.D.s. This was further emphasized during a meeting with the board in April when she suggested that the board vote on whether a Ph.D. must be the leader of a Ph.D. program. This attitude establishes the place that credentialing and the academic reward structure should have for the women in the AWF—traditional and professionalized.

In another meeting with the board, UA president, and UA provost, Wanda presented preliminary results from a research study about faculty salaries in the College of Medicine. Wanda went into great depth about the study’s methodology, including the variables and statistical tests used. Although this particular study was not completed by the AWF, the presentation from the AWF to the administration showed the value of collecting data and using statistical rigor, again using a fundamental aspect of professional academic work to advance the organization’s agenda.

It is important to mention that there was some emphasis in the early years of the AWF on more radical types of efforts. Numbers of receptions that the organization hosted indicate that informal networks and social support were a part of the AWF, as documented in newsletters from the early and mid-1980s. Also, many of the receptions, even some where the president, provost, or regents were present, were held at homes of women faculty, showing a bridge between personal and political that becomes less evident in the more recent years of the AWF. On one noted occasion, there was a performance from women’s literature and music that was the focus of one of the receptions in 1986, an experience often connected to radical feminism. Also, speakers focusing on menstruation and menopause showed an interest in the personal issues of women. This bridging of the personal, professional, and political was evident in the early 1990s as well. Receptions and luncheons included women’s music, art, and literature, as well as the continuation of programs on body, health, and the provision of childcare at receptions (specifically documented in the newsletters for 1993-94).

Respondents supported the strategies from the early years of the AWF that were evidenced in documents with lived experiences of more radical activism.

“We went to the organizing meetings and you would get 100 pissed off women faculty per meeting. It was pretty powerful stuff. And we knew that there were administrative representatives there, [so we would confront the administration].” (Lisa Bartholomew [AWF], personal communication)

“It was at a time when the University of Minnesota lost a [salary sex discrimination] case and there was an underlying, very genteel threat of our suing if we didn’t have salaries looked at. It was done in a very feminine way but it was also saying that we had strength and we could do that.” (Sallie Edgar

[AWF], personal communication)

The strategies described above diverge from the professionalized activism that characterizes most of the recent tactics of the organization. However, they are important aspects of the AWF history and indicate that while one strategy, professionalized activism, may be dominant, the nature of activism, even for this organization, is not strictly defined by one category.

The newsletters, in and of themselves, also demonstrated the complexity of strategies. Newsletters were written to educate and to raise the consciousness of the membership.

“We have used our newsletter to disseminate that we are a group who is interested in [women faculty] issues.” (Nora Islip [AWF], personal communication)

“The newsletters are the way to keep the membership really in touch. Historically, we even sent out newsletters to those who weren’t dues paying members to keep people still a part of the loop.” (Olivia Nelson [AWF], personal communication)

The newsletters were an important way to keep the membership connected and informed of the issues that were salient to women faculty. The newsletters often provided information about the status of women and encouraged the membership to act. However, the newsletters continually reprinted articles from national sources, professional newsletters, and scholarly books and journals as a way to raise awareness (e.g., AWF Newsletters from January, 1982; September, 1999; and February, 2000). This reliance on scholarly evidence to inform the membership of climate issues mixes the radical feminist strategy of consciousness raising with professionalized activism. This is further evidenced in the newsletters from 1999-2000. In these issues, there was considerable mention of professionalized activist strategies used at other elite institutions to make the climate better for women faculty (e.g., Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Michigan), as well as efforts to create national networks to raise consciousness and to get ideas. Attending academic conferences, joining e-mail lists for professional associations, reaching out to the American Association of University Professors Committee W were among the strategies encouraged. By informing the AWF of strategies used by prestigious institutions and professional associations, the newsletters, and hence the AWF, encouraged isomorphic behavior of other professionalized activist tactics.

In sum, professionalized activism became the primary strategy of the AWF. There had been circumstances when the organization utilized techniques that bridged the personal, political, and professional, like consciousness raising in the newsletters and providing programs about work life issues. Yet, these tactics did little to call the professional legitimacy of the women involved in the AWF into question. In fact, even in some of those more radical situations, there were some underlying efforts toward professionalized activism, like providing supporting scholarly evidence about campus climate issues in the newsletters and asking administrators with professional experience in work life to share their perspectives. In the early years of the AWF, there were threats of a class action suit, and

large rallies of women gathering around salary equity concerns. However, these activities fell into the background as more professionalized activism began to dominate the work of the AWF.

The FWC also used professionalized activist strategies, but unlike the AWF, they pursued other strategies to a greater extent. This is not to say that professionalism and professionalized activism didn't have a significant place in the work of the FWC. Rather, the FWC prioritized the types of strategies differently than the AWF, conceptualizing their members as activists who were also professionals, foregrounding the former identity.

Like the AWF, the FWC used the university system and tools used by academics and administrators to draw attention to the FWC's causes.

“We have used a number of strategies. We have put people on committees. In order to do that, we have had to get on the committees that make those appointments.” (Irene North [FWC], personal communication)

“[We have worked at] gathering the data, getting the comparative data, and using our peer institutions [to show] where we stand and where we are deficient.” (Karen Smith [FWC], personal communication)

Central to the professional work within academe is conducting research, writing memos, following the bureaucratic rules, and serving on committees. The FWC used all these techniques to shed light on their concerns and to potentially change the status quo. The members of the FWC also created networks within the university and used their status as respected academics to foster these connections.

“We have done our time. Some of us at a level we wish we really didn't have to do. We have used the internal procedures of the university...we have enough people who hold, not just tenure, but respect on the campus, that we can work in from a variety of directions and get an ear. It doesn't mean we are going to get the change we want, but we are going to get an ear.” (Irene North [FWC], personal communication)

“For one thing, the faculty [on the FWC] have gained more authority. Over the last 5 or 8 years, the women leading the Caucus have become full professors. They have won all the [research and teaching] awards that I have mentioned to you.” (Karen Smith [FWC], personal communication)

The Caucus recognized that those who have the power to make decisions were influenced by the tools of the academy. Many of the members earned their academic status by being respected professionals, and they learned how to use their status to benefit the FWC. Professional prestige has provided some legitimacy to the Caucus, which has included getting an audience to listen to its concerns.

In a May 3, 2000, letter to the board of regents and system-wide president, the FWC shared concerns it had about the data sources that were used annually to report the numbers of women faculty and

faculty of color to the state legislature. To emphasize the revered place of rigorous research, the letter stated:

“In a research laboratory, such data manipulation would be immediately suspect and indeed would not be condoned by any reputable scientist, and should not be used in this case either.”

The FWC used the professional language of the academy to encourage change. In a subsequent report to the state legislative committee on gender equity, the FWC again reinforced the need to conduct rigorous research. The report explained the shortcomings of one particular data source and suggested using another, more comprehensive source. It also critiqued the manner in which the data was compared to peer institutions. The content of the letter to the regents and the report to the legislature demonstrated how professional activism (i.e., conducting research) was used by the FWC to advance its agenda.

Drafting resolutions and using the academic senate to provide support and a voice for the resolutions were other ways that the FWC used the professionalized activism. The FWC worked from within the system, using “proper channels,” to educate the community about issues that were important to women faculty. They also wrote letters, including a letter to the university football coach, expressing their concerns about how a student-athlete was disciplined. In addition, the FWC has encouraged women faculty, as evidenced in the agenda and minutes from a June 1993 meeting, to volunteer for a task force to create a more inclusive curriculum and to identify other women as potential honorary degree recipients. All of these professionalized activist methods worked within the university system to create change and to advance the FWC’s agenda.

While the FWC engaged in several professionalized strategies, the members put more emphasis on other tactics, connected to, but outside of, the university. The documents analyzed supported this. For example, they included more press releases, petitions to the board of regents, resolutions to the legislature, calls to attend legislative hearings and regent meetings, and descriptions of university-wide forums to discuss gender equity rather than data-driven memos and invitations to meet with university administrators.

In two different electronic mail messages to the members of the FWC, home and office phone numbers of legislators and regents were listed and members were encouraged to call them to voice their concerns about recent propositions in front of these groups. The FWC did not intend to sit on the sidelines; the documents, interviews, and observation of the academic senate meeting showed that the caucus wanted to be involved and have a voice. In a March 2000 message to the members of the FWC, the co-chairs asked them to attend an upcoming state legislature meeting. The co-chairs said of the legislature, “they need to know we’re watching them, just as the university needs to know the legislature is watching.” The FWC’s vision and strategies went to outside the campus-proper, because for the FWC, professionalized activism was not enough.

“[The FWC] always [tries] to go through channels...but it never works, so we have to go elsewhere.” (Nancy Nichols [FWC], personal communication).

“We know we have to go outside and piss everybody off. Go to the papers. Go to national organizations.” (Irene North [FWC], personal communication)

It is the sense that their voices were silenced or ignored by the administration that prompts the FWC to use other strategies in order to put additional pressure on the university. Nonetheless, it is significant to note that the group did use the chain of command and the university structure initially to try to advance their agenda—but it was not limited to those tactics.

Another example of the difference in activist strategies between the AWF and the FWC was evidenced in a 2000 resolution written by the Caucus to the board of regents, demanding the resignation of the system-wide president due to his lack of initiative and response toward gender issues. This adversarial stance toward the administration often sparked controversy, made good copy, and ultimately attracted the attention of the public. In fact, the activism of the FWC has been mentioned throughout the media, from the campus and local community newspapers to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *48 Hours*, and *Sports Illustrated*. The FWC welcomed the press, for it raised the public’s and the university’s consciousness.

At UNL, the women involved in the FWC often concentrated on strategies that put pressure on the university from outside the campus. Going to the local newspapers and testifying in front of the state legislature were not unusual tactics used by the group. In fact, every woman with whom I spoke mentioned going to the media to expose unfair campus situations as a critical strategy for the FWC.

“It was a small media market [compared to Chicago, where I am now] and things that happened at the university were a big deal...Anything that has a whiff of controversy is a big deal. Anything at the university is a big deal, so it is pretty easy to get the word out and to find out who will release this information. We did campaign in the newspaper...” (Fran Cousins [FWC], personal communication)

“[Our main strategies are] publicity and being willing to go outside the university to speak to the media, [and] to speak to the state legislature.” (Catherine Eller [FWC], personal communication)

“Nicole and Catherine and Beth are really good at mobilizing press. A few years ago, I can’t even think of what the issues were, I went over and was interviewed with Nicole and some others about a particular issue we were talking to the administration about. So, getting the attention of the press, figuring out who we need to go to [is a strategy].” (Karen Smith [FWC], personal communication)

The women in the FWC recognize the value of forging relationships with individuals and groups outside the organization who can assist them in their activist work, as evidenced by their affinity toward working with the local press, as well as with external groups nationally.

“As you can see, we don’t just talk to ourselves. That is what makes [the administration] so mad, that we talk to the broader community. It is the fact that we know the editorial board. And it is the fact that we know [state] senators. It is the fact that we don’t just remain cloistered like a lot of academicians that makes them so mad.” (Beth Newman [FWC], personal communication)

“I think Irene and Beth and Nicole—I don’t know how they do it—they know a lot of other people on other campuses and they seem to be able to draw or make comparisons, and know strategies that other campuses have used.” (Catherine Eller [FWC], personal communication)

“I mean networking. One of the ways we have been able to address [the fact that our insurance doesn’t cover] birth control is by hooking up with a Women’s Legal Defense Fund in Washington before the EEOC ruling came down. We were beginning to find people who were willing to join in a class action suit. I think that is important.” (Karen Smith [FWC], personal communication)

For the FWC, professionalized activism was a tactic to use so that other strategies can be implemented. By strategically working within the system and gaining professional prestige, the FWC has gained some legitimacy, despite the animosity perceived between the administration and the organization. Because the FWC used the chain of command and included well-respected researchers and teachers in its membership, it was difficult for the university to completely dismiss the issues of the FWC. In some ways, professionalized activism has allowed the FWC to be more radical. They have a professional foundation upon which more radical strategies can be used. This differs from the AWF, where professionalized activism was the primary strategy.

The women in the AWF engaged primarily in what I have called professionalized activism. The academic tenets of teaching, research, and service were perpetuated through the work of the AWF. As a result, the organization, while intended to be grassroots and feminist, also fit neatly into the institutional structure. The teaching aspects were demonstrated through information sharing in newsletters; consciousness raising; and hosting professional development panels and seminars, designed to assist academic women in navigating the professional bureaucracy. The research-focused activism was evidenced through data collecting, creating empirical reports about the status of university women, and contracting with scholarly experts and consultants to conduct climate studies and make recommendations. The organization itself served the university; however, participants mentioned that volunteering to be part of the organization didn’t “count” toward promotion and tenure. Further, the women in the organization considered one of their most important activities to be meeting with university administrators, replicating service work in the academy.

The professionalized strategies of teaching, research, and service were also an important part of the activism in which the women in the FWC engaged. Because these professionalized strategies were integrated into their work, I have dubbed these women activist professionals. Their strategies differ enough from those of the AWF that professionalized activism was an insufficient categorization. This

is to say that the women academics in the FWC engaged in professionalized activism, but their strategies went beyond that to include others. The concepts used to identify each organization's primary strategies were intended to be linguistically similar, as the women in both organizations validate their work as professionals, while still being activists. However, the women in the FWC were more akin to feminist activists of the Second Wave because their strategies included creating resolutions, petitions, and press releases; and attending and speaking out at campus and state legislative meetings. Although the distinction is subtle, I saw these women prioritizing their activism slightly before their profession; whereas, the women in the AWF prioritized their profession slightly before their activism.

In the end, this research leads to several implications, not only for organizations like the AWF and the FWC, but for the institutions that have such organizations. First, campus-based grassroots feminist faculty organizations are faced with multiple influences that ultimately shape the way academic feminism is defined for these groups. The ways that women involved in such organizations define and embrace feminism, coupled with how they see themselves influenced by their profession, shape the sorts of strategies and agendas that they use. This means that organizations and professional socialization can have an impact on the sorts of activist strategies academic women pursue. While context is critical, it should not diminish the fact that the strategies described in this study can serve as examples for other academic women who are working to improve the climate on their own campuses.

Next, institutions can benefit from these sorts of organizations. This is not to suggest that administrative leaders should seek out members and establish an organization. To do so would erode the power germane to grassroots activism. In fact, the effectiveness of such organizations would be undermined, as is often the case with campus commissions on the status of women (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). Although upper-level administrators may view these organizations as annoyances or problems, as was the case at UNL, the successful women in these organizations have institutional loyalty. They are committed to improving the climate on their own campuses, not only for themselves but for the successful women who follow them. In a time when faculty have become increasingly more nationally and internationally focused, this is particularly meaningful.

Finally, and most importantly, the changes that have occurred due to the activism from campus-based grassroots feminist faculty organizations, whether through a formal policy change or through an increased sense of support for one woman, are tremendous benefits for any institution. A change that leads to greater access and equity should be embraced by any institution, and that change is often sparked by the activist agenda and strategies of organizations like the AWF and the FWC, whether pursued by professionalized activists or activist professionals.

The data and findings from this study provided an analysis of how women faculty in campus-based grassroots feminist organizations construct their activist strategies. In addition, they reinforced the

understanding of multiple strands of feminism that weave together to create a complex view of academic feminism. The academic women in this study sought to create a delicate balance between the influences of feminism, activism, and professionalism. They demonstrated that such a task is not easy and, in a changing academic profession, is on-going.

The findings and contributions to the literature about feminist faculty that are referred to in my study are important, but not exhaustive. In fact, based upon my research, I hope additional studies will explore activism among feminist academics. My study explored the shared influences of professionalization and feminism on the activism of women academics. A similar study that explores the how academic women create their strategies and agendas in feminist organizations within a professional disciplinary association would demonstrate how, or if, professionalization and feminism contribute to the activism in a national or international setting.

My study shared the strategies used by women academics at Research I institutions. Further research should be pursued to examine whether the issues and strategies differ for organizations in different types of institutions, including those that employ more women (e.g., community colleges, liberal arts colleges) (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1999). In addition, studies should be undertaken that consider how the lifecycles of feminist faculty organizations shape the nature of the activist strategies employed. Finally, future research should address the following questions: Does activism differ for academic men? If so, how? What do activist agendas and strategies look like for faculty of color and other underrepresented groups?

Given the recommendations for future research, it is clear that this study served its initial purpose as an exploration. Many questions about the nature of activism among feminist academics remain unanswered. However, this study has presented the rich experiences of academic women in two different grassroots feminist faculty organizations that have shed light on how they construct their strategies. This study can also serve as a springboard for future research that can provide more insights into activism among feminist academics.

In the final analysis, women in the Association for Women Faculty at the University of Arizona and in the Faculty Women's Caucus at the University of Nebraska have integrated feminism and professionalism to construct activist strategies. While their strategies may have limitations and there are other ways to pursue change, including structural, systemic change, these women and these organizations are successful and make a difference for other women and for the institutions of which they are a part. Perhaps these women haven't started a revolution, but that doesn't diminish their success nor does it mean that change has not occurred. Rather, the women in the AWF and the FWC show that grassroots activism is alive in the academy. Moreover, they challenge us to expand our preconceived notions of academic feminism and activism to include a broader range of strategies that have resulted in institutional change.

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* Hyer (1983) used pseudonyms for the names of the institutions where she conducted her study.

*At the time of the study, this was the most recent comparable data available.

*Each individual interview followed a semi-structured format and was audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

*Olivia Nelson and all other names of respondents are pseudonyms created to protect the confidentiality of each participant.