

Global Civic Engagement on Online Platforms: Women as Transcultural Citizens

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ABSTRACT

Global citizenship and digital citizenship are two concepts that reflect the huge role globalization and the Internet have played in the contemporary societies. My study is located at the intersection of these two concepts. It contributes to the ongoing theoretical and moral deliberations on citizenship by arguing and providing empirical evidence in support of emergence of a global civic subculture that I call transcultural citizenship. The study, a multi-sited and translocal ethnography, focuses on women who are civically active, digitally fluent, and have a global orientation, and examines how such women's participation on global civic websites influence their experience of citizenship. Through indepth interviews of 23 women from 15 different countries spread across different continents, supplemented by an online survey and textual analysis of their online civic participation, the study examines the Internet's role in negotiation of local, national, and global citizenships. The findings show that my participants take multiple and different pathways to online civic engagement but they all experience citizenship in relational and affective ways as a connection to fellow citizens rather than merely to states or governments. These women share civic values and practices that are at variance with the dominant nation-state based concept of citizenship and thus form a global civic subculture. I argue that transcultural citizenship better explains this subculture than the more familiar term global citizenship because transcultural citizenship is performed in relation with defined others where interpersonal relations and horizontal communication across cultures are more important than legal-political institutional governance. Transcultural citizens are embedded in local

cultures but these local cultures are also transcultural because of the constant and complex flows of people, images, information, and goods. Internet plays a significant role in shaping and sustaining transcultural citizenship through affordances like peer-to-peer networks, global connections, multi-modal expression, and flexible communication. The online civic websites and social media provide opportunities for developing global civic identities and spaces for transforming individual stories of oppression and resistance into public issues. My study raises hope for a realistic and cautious optimism about the Internet's role in the experience of citizenship that reflects the changing times.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Every generation has some defining historical events and forces that shape its unique identity. For those living through the 1990s and 2000s, the coming together of two large forces -- globalization and digital media/digital information technologies -- has had a profound impact on the way people live, work, play, socialize, experience citizenship, and participate in civic life. The overarching goal of my research over the past several years has been to examine how ordinary people use media and technology to experience agency and participate in social change. My current research continues this exploration with the recognition that globalization and the Internet have compelled us to ask new questions about technology, citizenship, and participation in social change; for example, under what conditions do global technologies shape civic agency in individuals whose lives are constantly interacting with local and global structural and cultural influences? What are the different pathways that individuals take in becoming civically and digitally active, and how are media and technologies used for global orientation as well as local negotiations of global influences? And finally, what kind of education would encourage an empowering use of new media technologies?

The focus of this study is on women who use the Internet, specifically global or transnational civic websites and social media, in order to engage in transnational civic work and build global connections. The study examines what value and meaning these women find in transnational and digital public engagement as a part of their day-to-day experiences of citizenship. My study claims that there is an emergence of a global civic subculture that is being driven by people like my participants who are globally oriented and digitally fluent. I call this subculture “transcultural citizenship” because it is experienced culturally rather than through geo-political governance. Communication across cultures is a crucial element in this relational

approach to citizenship and therefore, the Internet, with its affordances like global connectivity, peer-to-peer sharing, and many-to-many communication, plays an important role in shaping and sustaining this subculture.

My research is situated at the intersection of several scholarly fields of research: new media technologies; gender studies; democratic civic participation and the public sphere; and, the negotiation of local, national, and global citizenships. Citizenship is a concept that has remained relevant across historical and geographical lines, but at the same time, the meanings and practices associated with the concept are dynamic and fluid. This is one reason why a number of scholars from several different disciplines have called for a rethinking of our notions of citizenship, civic engagement, democratic participation, and public spheres in ways that reflect the changes brought about by the intersections of globalization and new media technologies.

Among several new conceptualizations of citizenship that have emerged as a result of this rethinking, two are especially relevant to globalization and new media technologies: digital citizenship and global citizenship.

Digital citizenship emerges out of scholarly interest in the impact of new media technologies on civic practices. After a period of initial optimism that produced a body of theoretical literature that highlights the potential for new media technologies to make global connections and facilitate civic engagement (Benkler [2006] and Rheingold [1993], among others), there has been a string of studies demonstrating that the mere availability of communication technology is no guarantee that it will be used for civic/political purposes (Bimber, 2000; Dahlgren 2007); that most of the use of new media by young people has been banal more than transformative; and that youth use new media to connect with those who are familiar rather than with those in different socio-cultural locations (Boyd, 2008; Buckingham,

2008; Livingstone, 2009; Watkins, 2009). Internet-based civic engagement has also been dismissed as a low-risk, low-engagement version of civic engagement -- more like a pseudo-engagement (Cornelliesen et al., n.d.). At the same time, scholars like Bennett et al. (2011) Friedland (1996), and Papacharizzi (2010) have urged us to consider changing citizenship practices under the new media environment that may take different forms than what we are familiar with but offer equally valid alternatives for democratic participation.

The second concept, global citizenship, has captured our attention as a result of the accelerated transnational flow of people, media, money, information, and ideas under globalization. More and more people now live outside their countries of origin and our increasing interconnectedness has opened our eyes to the fact that global challenges require a global response. Although the roots of the concept of “global citizenship” go back to Graeco-Roman times, specifically to the Stoics and the Cynics and the later 18th century philosophical work on cosmopolitanism, we have increasingly realized its relevance today (see Chapter Three for a historical overview of the concepts related to global citizenship). At the same time, the Internet has provided a tool so that people all over the world can connect to one another without any physical link. The Internet has thus made it possible for them to experience global citizenship through acts of communication, through everyday online conversations.

Amidst such observations, my study focuses on a subset of women who are civically active, use the Internet to connect globally for civic participation, and call themselves global citizens. These women are at the core of my study and also at the core of a global civic subculture that I call “transcultural citizenship.” My participants call themselves global citizens as it is a more commonly used term, but based on my empirical findings I argue that the global civic subculture that my study has identified can be better explained as “transcultural

citizenship” because it implies a stance that is relational, is experienced culturally rather than through legal and political governance, and is embedded in participants’ local cultures. These local cultures also experience transculturality as a result of globalization.

I am specifically focusing on women for several reasons. Women have conventionally faced exclusion from and limitations in public participation, and globalization is a gendered process. In most societies, women have been burdened with preserving and transferring cultural traditions. Hence, their experience of globalization has been different from that of men. I see my participants as cases of “positive deviance” (Sternin, 2003; Zeitlin, 1990). Positive deviance is an approach to social, organizational, and behavior change that is “premised on the belief that in every community there are certain individuals and groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources...” (Singhal, 2013, p.17). I recognize the women in my study as cases of positive deviance for two reasons: one, their new media use is civic and transnational, not only entertainment-related or commercial, and local; and two, they have successfully negotiated the gender limitations on public engagement. The women in my study have not only resisted disempowering messages from media and their own cultures, but they use the Internet to circulate counter-messages.

My study makes several conceptual and methodological contributions to the literature. The majority of scholarly work on global citizenship has been of a theoretical and philosophical nature. Scholars like Appiah (1996), Nussbaum (1996), and Dower (2003) have argued for a revival of global citizenship but it is important to validate theoretical, cognitive, and moral arguments about the revival of global citizenship with empirically-grounded research. Do people

experience this revival in their lifeworlds¹ and if so, how do they experience it?

Based on the lived experiences of women in several different parts of the world, my study claims that they experience such a revival and self-identify as global citizens but they remain locally rooted. My alternative conceptualization of transcultural citizenship argues that it is possible to experience civic engagement beyond one's national boundaries through a relational and discursive approach. My alternative conceptualization resolves the two main issues that are often brought up to argue that global citizenship is both undesirable and not feasible: the issue of a lack of global governance and the issue of global citizens becoming rootless nomads (see Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of these issues). I argue that transcultural citizenship is experienced predominantly through horizontal communication networks that operate alongside but apart from macro-level institutions. Besides, the civic actors are embedded in their local cultures and connect globally from this embeddedness. Transcultural citizenship, therefore, represents the emerging civic subculture better than the more familiar concept of global citizenship.

My study expects to contribute to the empirical research on global and digital citizenships by addressing the following gaps: the low representation of ordinary citizens and their day-to-day experiences and the low representation of women from the global South in empirical studies. Ferree (2006) observes that the global interaction today differs from that of the past in one important way. Previously, it was the prerogative of the governments and the elites, but today it increasingly involves ordinary citizens. This is not adequately reflected in the literature that I have reviewed. My review shows that new media's role in movements, mobilization, and transnational activism has been well-documented, but closer examination is

¹ Life-world (German *Lebenswelt*, a term in phenomenology) means “the world as immediately or directly experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life...The lifeworld includes individual, social, perceptual, and practical experiences” (Life-world, 2014 www.britannica.com).

needed to identify how new media and globalization intersect with the particularities of individuals who are not full-time or professional activists in shaping the experience of transnational citizenship. If we look at citizenship as a quotidian practice in relationship with fellow citizens and consider people-to-people interactions an important part of citizenship -- and not just people's interactions with their governments -- it is important to study how ordinary people enact citizenship in their daily lives through various discursive modes. Although online civic engagement has been a widely researched area in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, only scattered research is available on participation from other parts of the world. My study examines the individual, day-to-day, and DIY experience of citizenship through online engagement, with a particular focus on the process of engagement. It also represents the voices of women from several different locations, both from the global North and global South. By making visible locations, populations, and experiences not routinely represented in previous research, my study contributes to a pluralist and polycentric approach to research that leads to more comprehensive theory building and policy development. By taking a situated approach, looking at ordinary citizens, and going beyond Eurocentric perspectives, my study contributes to an understanding of facets of transnational and digital citizenship that have not yet been fully explored.

I am aware that my study focuses on a comparatively small, unique, and privileged group of women. My argument is that just because a group is small, unique, and privileged doesn't mean that it must be dismissed as a potential research interest. Several reasons justify our attention to this group. One is that even though their percentage to total population may be small, in absolute numbers, these engaged citizens still represent an important segment of people. For example, TakingITGlobal has 4,50,000 members, Avaaz has 35,082,181 members, and WorldPulse has 60,000 members (as reported on April 27, 2014). Another reason is that the

number of Internet users is rising rapidly the world over and if we are proactive in ensuring that people have affordable and easy access to the Internet, this number will keep rising. My study indicates an emerging subculture that is shaped and sustained through individual acts of communication and facilitates positive civic identities. Participants in my study are at the forefront of this global phenomenon and they have recognized and used the transformative potential of the Internet, with its interactivity, convergence, and participatory content. Understanding their experience is important for understanding how civic and digital engagement come together to produce both agency and global identities.

My study expects to fill some gaps in the existing literature and specifically in studies based on empirical research. My quest on this topic began in 2003 at a Salzburg Seminar on Youth and Community Development, where I was first exposed to a global civic website. That website was TakingITGlobal or TIG. Founded in 2000, it is a thriving community today with more than four hundred thousand members from all over the world. Some other examples of similar websites are the Worldbank's YouThink, the UNICEF Voices of Youth, Avaaz, Peacejam, and Global Voices Online (please see Appendix Four for a comprehensive list of such websites). These websites are global with respect to the issues that they address and the participation they draw. Literature on globalization, new media, and youth identities (e.g., Arnett, 2000), suggests that Internet-based communities that were civic and global in nature would be potentially rich sites for experiencing global citizenship and shaping global civic identities. It is also a question worth examining how people who self-identified as global citizens negotiated their local and national citizenships. My specific research questions were:

1. How does participation in online global civic communities influence women's experience of citizenship and civic identity?

2. Would such global communities encourage strong global civic identities and if so, how are these identities expressed and experienced online? What happens to local identities in the process?

3. How do women negotiate their local, national, and global citizenships?

My search for an appropriate methodology for conducting such a study led me to the cultural studies approach to studying citizenship. Although I respect normative frameworks as essential to theory building, I was uncomfortable with imposing any normative frameworks on women situated in vastly different socio-cultural and geopolitical situations. Besides, I was more interested in the day-to-day experiences and processes that shaped citizenship for these women that might not have been reflected in the existing normative frameworks because the intersection of global and digital citizenships is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Dahlgren (2003), Couldry (2006), and Hermes (2006) are the key proponents of a cultural studies approach that calls for going beyond strictly legal-formal notions of citizenship and looking at unconventional spaces and domains in order to find citizenship as a lived practice. This approach resonates with my goal to investigate citizenship as a cultural phenomenon inductively (see Chapter Three for a detailed discussion) Such inductive studies strengthen normative frameworks.

My study asks the young women themselves what their idea of citizenship, civic engagement, and participation is and if and when they find participation in Internet-based communities meaningful and valuable in experiencing citizenship. Rather than assessing women based on a normative standard, I ask them if they see themselves as global citizens, if they experience tension between the local and global aspects of citizenship, and how, if at all, they negotiate or resolve it. I haven't labeled these women as global citizens, but this is how they self-identify, and they have their own reasons and justifications for that self-identification and it

is these that I am interested in.

Even when these women share the characteristics of being highly engaged digitally and globally, my study shows that their pathways to engagement are unique to their lifeworlds, and are situated in their socio-cultural, economic, and geopolitical locations. It is important to trace these different pathways in order to understand the kind of life experiences and education that would encourage positive civic identities in women situated in different locations, and what educational and Internet governance policies would enhance the Internet as a space for democratic participation. Writing about Internet use and civic engagement in general, Yong-Chan and Ball-Rockeach (2009) report contradictory observations by different researchers. It is then useful to look at the conclusions drawn by the scholars working from a social shaping of technology perspective, as Yong-Chan and Ball-Rockeach have done, to note that the relationship between Internet use and civic engagement is conditional according to other variables, like the degree of access to social, political or technological resources, motivations for Internet use, and the geo-ethnic environment of community life. So, it is not digital media per se, but the kind of processes and participation that it encourages that will determine their contribution. For example, McLeod et al. (2010) argue that communication competence is the most crucial foundation for civic competence. The meta-concept of communication competence, however, is represented by a range of interdependent and interconnected components like family communication patterns, deliberative activities, new media use, and interpersonal discussion. This is the reason why situating the analysis in the individual lifeworld becomes important in understanding the subject's digital and civic participation. The discussion above makes clear the rationale for choosing an ethnographic approach. A translocal, multi-sited ethnography involving in-depth interviews and textual analysis is well-suited to address the multiple subjectivities and

to attend to the “cultural dimension of citizenship” (Greene 2002, p.10; Asen, 2004, p.193).

Similarly, when researchers ask the question whether the Internet facilitates democratic participation, civic engagement, or citizenship practices, they answer it in the affirmative or negative as based on their own concepts of what democratic participation and civic engagement should look like. For example, depending upon whether we consider voting, contestation, debate, dialogue, or formal verbal deliberation as the foundation of democratic participation (or whether we subscribe to the communitarian, representative, or deliberative model of democracy), we pass the verdict about whether the Internet can provide a viable public sphere or not. Papacharissi (2010) argues that most civic engagement models are designed based on our yearning for the old model of the public sphere that may no longer be valid. When I began looking at global civic engagement websites, what struck me the most was the vast amount of individual expression but very little content in the form of comments, substantive dialogue, or deliberation. Rather than dismissing these sites for their apparent lack of deliberation, my study probes to see if civic participation on the Internet takes a different form. During the course of my study, I also realized that social media sites, like Facebook and Twitter, that were not originally designed as civic media have become an integral part of citizenship experience, and hence I have broadened my inquiry to include these.

I understand that the subculture that I am studying is still nascent. It is difficult to make any large claims about its long term global impact at this point. The small sample size, self-selection of participants, and the limited portion of the web-sphere I have examined in my study cannot answer all the complex questions that exist about the Internet and citizenship, but the study does help raise and explore new possibilities. I also observe that every construct my study addresses is complex because it is historically and geo-politically shaped and an in-depth

treatment of these constructs is beyond this single study. For example, political economy as well as media cultures and freedom in each country also plays a constitutive role in shaping individual experiences. Also, most local cultures are changing under global influences and yet the global is experienced through the local in complex ways. The Internet plays a huge role in global-local interactions and in turn is impacting the way people perceive national belonging. My study touches upon only a tiny sliver of this dynamic, multi-layered, multi-dimensional, and multi-sited phenomenon.

I, however, believe the practices of transcultural citizenship that I have found in my work contribute to our conceptual framework of digital and global citizenships because these practices reflect our changing times. Transcultural online civic participation reinforces as well as shapes positive identities and civic values. My study indicates the especially empowering role of online civic communities for those with marginalized identities. I also claim that the Internet plays an important role in transcultural citizenship because Internet-based communities are spaces where ordinary people share personal stories of oppression and resistance. The global circulation of local stories help to bring the recognition that issues marginalized as personal are in fact often universal and have strong structural dimensions. In recent years, we have observed a disconcerting trend of the hardening of nationalist sentiments the world over. My participants show us a way to use the Internet to positively channel our struggles to retain meaning and agency in life amidst conflicts and uncertainties. My study, therefore, has implications for intercultural communication, civic engagement/education, and media literacy education. It has also encouraged me to think more deeply about the internationalization of education.

The most significant part of my study is that I personally experienced the affordances and limitations of new media technologies. Not many studies have used these technologies to

study the Internet use. I observed the invisible trajectories of the information I posted, experienced bonding online, recognized the real possibility of making connections worldwide, and was awed and moved by the astonishing generosity of strangers who have in the process become friends. At the same time, I also experienced frustrations with people not responding, my inability to ascertain real identities, and incivility. On the whole, I would say that I started as a skeptic but got converted to cautious optimism by the end of the study -- not an optimism that saw this subculture soon becoming the mainstream civic culture, but an optimism that says that if desired, the Internet can be used for meaningful global participation. In the end, online transnational participation can facilitate a positive sense of self and better intercultural relationships.

The theoretical background of the research, the methodology, and the arguments that emerge from this investigation are presented through the following chapters of this dissertation. I begin with the methodology chapter (Chapter Two), which lays the foundation for examining citizenship as a translocal and cultural phenomenon. I argue that my study falls under the umbrella of multi-sited and translocal ethnography and my sample, despite its restrictions, provides an appropriate case for studying an emerging phenomenon. The chapter describes the process of collecting data and the analytic frameworks I have developed for the study using scholarly literature, previous research, and an inductive reading of my data. In Chapter Three, I argue for a reconfiguration of the concept of the citizenship in order to reflect the digital and global citizenship practices of my participants and to propose the concept of transcultural citizenship as a culturally-rooted approach to experience citizenship beyond the national boundaries. My analysis in this chapter highlights the important role that horizontal communication plays in the transcultural citizenship that is experienced in interpersonal rather

than institutional ways. In Chapter Four, I present my analysis of the global civic web-sphere. I describe the kinds of spaces that are available online for civic engagement and focus on the global civic websites and social media like Facebook and Twitter, which my participants use as civic media. My analysis shows how the websites use the affordances of the Internet to make possible the experience of transcultural citizenship and what could be some of the challenges in this process. I conclude with the changing role of civic websites with the emergence of social media and its use for civic purposes, but at the same time argue that the global civic websites have an important contribution to make in facilitating transcultural citizenship through allowing for global expression, networks, dialogue, collaboration, and collective action.

Chapter Five to Seven present my findings on the “how” aspect of transcultural citizenship as a civic subculture, specifically as it is experienced by my 23 interview participants. I present this analysis through the seven dimensions of the analytic framework of transcultural citizenship: identity, value, information, connection, expression, dialogue, and action. Chapter Five presents my findings and discussion on identity and values as they are the constitutive dimensions of being global and civic. Chapter Six presents the findings on the next four dimensions- knowledge and information, connection, expression, and dialogue- that are associated with communicative action and the affordances of the Internet for influencing the process of transcultural civic engagement. Chapter Seven analyzes the efficacy of the online civic engagement and the challenges involved with online activism. At the end of the Chapter Seven I argue that despite limitations and challenges, all of my participants use the Internet to experience transcultural citizenship in culturally rooted ways and their global engagement strengthens rather than weakens their local engagement. My findings show that women take different pathways to becoming civically and digitally active but their online participation

contributes significantly in their global orientation, strengthens their civic interests, and reinforces or shapes positive civic identities.

Finally, my conclusion claims that transcultural citizenship provides a way for my participants to experience civic agency and encourages values leading to an ethics of care. Online civic spaces have the potential to bring personal and marginalized issues to the public agenda, and they also encourage society-wide dialogues. Transcultural citizenship does not replace national citizenship but complements it. Ultimately, it is an approach to citizenship that is better suited to handle our global and converged lives without losing the joy of connectedness and our local roots.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological approach, the reasons for my methodological choices, the procedures for sampling and data collection, and the framework for data analysis. Before concluding the chapter, I highlight some ethical and methodological questions the study raises.

The research questions that guided my study are:

1. How does participation in online global civic communities influence women's experience of citizenship and civic identity?
2. Would such global communities encourage strong global civic identities and if so, how are these identities expressed and experienced online? What happens to local identities in the process?
3. How do women negotiate their local, national, and global citizenships?

My review of the literature suggests that there is already a good deal of theoretical and discursive work on global citizenship and the role of the Internet in shaping global citizenship experience, but not enough in the form of empirical work. Most of the empirical work in this area is focused on organizations, full-time activists, or movements, rather than women like my participants, who are students, mothers, health practitioners, marketing executives, journalists among other professions. There is also empirical research regarding the use of digital media by youth in the global North, or on youth in managed projects, but not on individuals who engage in online civic activities as a part of their daily lives as ordinary citizens in different parts of the world. My research is empirical and my sample is truly global: the twenty-three women that I interviewed are from fifteen different countries and represent several different geo-political and socio-cultural locations. In my study, I examine the role of local cultures in online global civic

engagement, something strongly recommended in the literature but not yet adequately and empirically examined in a global context.

A crucial step in my study was to determine the parameters of global civic identity and global citizenship. The review of literature on global citizenship and cosmopolitanism (e.g. Dower, 2002; Held (2002), Kung,2003; Montaya (2009), Nussbaum (1996), Williams, 2002) indicates that most of the literature normatively defines what attributes a “global citizen” should possess and what kind of activities he/she would engage in to qualify as a global citizen. There have been attempts (e.g., Oxfam, 1997) to develop a set of criteria to assess if a person has developed global civic identity. I was not comfortable with imposing such normative frameworks on women situated in such vastly different situations. All of the acts and qualities normatively listed under global citizenship would not have the same meaning and value in every culture and again, what citizenship practices are feasible or available or desirable also depend on our geo-political locations. I found the cultural studies approach to citizenship as proposed by Dahlgren (2003), Couldry (2006), and Hermes (2006) appropriate to my research questions and a good method for making visible the range of citizenship experiences of my participants because this approach takes into consideration an individual’s day-to-day life experiences.

The Cultural Studies Approach to Studying Citizenship

The cultural studies approach is a theoretical and methodological approach for studying citizenship and civic engagement that takes the individual day-to-day experiences of civic life and its meanings into consideration. Dahlgren (2003), Couldry (2006), and Hermes (2006) are the key proponents of this approach, which calls for going beyond strictly legal-formal notions of citizenship and rethinking citizenship in terms of cultural studies. They define this approach as “a strong interdisciplinary academic practice that is invested deeply in empirical research in

everyday meaning-formation” (Dahlgren, p.259). Dahlgren proposes we look beyond “[i]nformed discussion and formal participation...as the only significant domains when it comes to citizenship as lived practices.” He urges us to take into consideration “everyday practice, the hidden resources for citizenship, the inexorable interplay between public and private in shaping civic skills.” Dahlgren argues, “Rather than define beforehand what the public sphere might be...we need to take our cue from what actually happens in everyday settings.”

Couldry (2006) emphasizes investigating the uncertainties about what constitutes the culture (or cultures) of citizenship. According to him, we need to pose questions like: “What would a culture of citizenship look like? What new cultures of citizenship might be emerging and where or how can we best look for them empirically?” (p.323). Couldry also reiterates that it is important to note people’s subjective reflections: What do *they* feel and experience? He argues “there has been a significant gap in studying the experiential dimensions of citizenship, studying what it actually feels like to be a citizen” (p.323). What are the practices that link private action to the public sphere, beyond the obvious act of walking down to the polling station to cast a vote?” (p.324). This is exactly what I intended to do in my study. Dahlgren claims that “[c]ivic culture points to those features of the socio-cultural world- dispositions, practices, processes -- that constitute pre-conditions for people’s actual participation in the public sphere, in civil and political society (also who do they include and exclude)...civic culture is an analytic construct that seeks to identify the possibilities of people acting in the role of citizens” (Dahlgren, 2003, P.154-5). Dahlgren’s conceptualization of “civic culture,” therefore, is at the foundation of my study.

Asen (2004) draws on this approach and critiques the tendency to conceptualize citizenship "as constituted in specific acts" (p.190). He sees several problems with what he calls

"counting citizenship" (p.190). He argues that counting citizenship circumscribes agency by setting normative standards or expectations, characterizes citizenship as a zero-sum game, and ignores the different meanings and significance that various activities may hold for different people. Asen proposes a discourse theory of citizenship that conceives citizenship as a mode of public engagement and recognizes citizenship as a process. He argues, "Rather than asking what counts as citizenship, we should ask: how do people enact citizenship?" (p.191).

I must make it clear here that I am not against normative frameworks. In fact, they are essential to theory building. It is, however, necessary that we make sure that our normative frameworks are not rigid; that they reflect the changing social realities, and that they represent different stakeholders. It is therefore necessary to validate our normative frameworks from time to time with empirical research that is pluralistic enough to represent our contemporary world situation. The intersection of global and digital citizenships is comparatively a fairly new phenomenon and one that is rapidly acquiring a global spread. The conventional normative frameworks of citizenship derived from a limited population from a single part of the world may not correctly reflect these new phenomena. This is the primary reason for adopting the cultural studies approach in my study.

I find the cultural studies approach resonating closely with the research questions of my study especially because, as Asen points out, it opens up the idea of citizenship as a culturally- and historically-situated process that takes into consideration both the social and structural components of citizenship, as well as individual agency, in the enactment of citizenship. I, however, have some issues with the cultural studies approach, especially the tendency to reject all normative concepts. For instance, I observe a tendency to assign the term "civic" to all kinds of daily activities in some studies. I agree with Biesta et al. (2009) when they critique the idea of

citizenship-as-outcome for its strong instrumental orientation, but how far should we stretch the concept of citizenship? Does every quotidian opportunity for “having a say,” “being taken seriously,” and “having an influence” (p.15) constitute citizenship as Biesta, et al. argue? Similarly, Jenkins et al. (n.d.) argue in favor of the civic potential of young people’s participatory cultures but again, do all affiliations (such as social media and game clans), all expressions (such as modding, fan fiction, and mash-ups), all collaborative problem solving actions (such as alternative reality gaming and spoiling), and all circulations (such as podcasting and blogging) merit to be considered civic? It is in answering these questions that I believe in differentiating the civic from the social and personal as having a ‘public’ dimension even when I accept that these do not operate as watertight compartments anymore and are often interwoven in a single act of expression or action, as one often observes online. In civic activities, one goes beyond the personal ramifications of an issue and considers its larger impact. There is an element of public connectedness (an imagined community of strangers is involved) and there is a goal towards positive social change, however small (“positive” here is of course subjective to the individual’s ideology)

Is This an Ethnography?

The goal of my study is to examine the processes and practices of citizenship in a way that is culturally and geo-politically situated. Ethnographic methods have the potential to bring out the nuances of such a situation, where a normatively-imposed theoretical model is not relevant to the participants’ varied experiences. My study, however, was carried out entirely using new media technologies: online survey, Skype, emails, and websites. I did not travel to the fifteen countries/locations represented in the study and did not have a single face-to-face meeting with my participants while I was conducting the interviews. I, however, claim that I was

successful in achieving “a commitment to immersion, building of trust, long-term observation, or participation in daily lives of research participants” as suggested by Murphy & Kraidy, (2003, p.3) to a fair extent. I have been keenly observing several global civic websites, such as TakingITGlobal, Global Voices Online, UNICEF Voices of Youth Peacejam, UNOY Young Peacebuilders, and Avaaz for a decade now, and I am a member of a few such communities. I started taking informal notes on such websites at the very beginning of my study and more formally so after I developed my analytical framework. I have been in contact with my participants since the time they volunteered for the interviews (between July and December 2012) and have developed friendships with several of them. I am a friend with them on Facebook and we follow one another on Twitter. On these social media platforms, I get a glimpse of their personal and social lives that are not strategically showcased just for me as a researcher.

Murphy & Kraidy (2003) point to Marcus’ conceptualization of multi-sited ethnography as an approach more suited to contemporary media studies that may require more complex and multi-layered investigation. They suggest a rethinking of “doing fieldwork” in media audience studies (p.4) and argue that ethnography’s conventional focus on depth might not address the breadth necessary to respond to globalization. Murphy and Kraidy have suggested the term “translocal ethnography” and a more fluid notion of research “sites” (2003, pp.299-307). They argue that “[t]he idea of a *translocal* ethnography is born out of the paradox that in times of globalization, a rigorous ethnography must be *local and at the same time cannot be only local*” (p.307). In the same vein, Couldry (2003) has argued that the consequence of such a rethinking is “the dissolution of that apparently innocent methodological presumption, the ethnographer ‘present,’ present ‘there’ in the ‘field’ where the ethnographic agent is based” (p. 43). Based on these arguments, my study traversing local and global sites -- and the online and offline

lifeworlds of individuals -- can be conceptualized as a translocal ethnography.

Methods

I used three methods for data collection. The primary method of my study is semi-structured, in-depth interviews using an interview protocol that allows for flexibility- that is, the interview can progress according to the individual response- and yet also keep focus on the key questions of the study. I also used two supplementary methods for interviewing. One, an informal online survey designed using Qualtrics, was posted on selected global civic websites or their Facebook pages in order to get a broad idea of the key characteristics of women who have participated in such communities, and also to recruit volunteers for participation in the interviews. Two, textual qualitative analysis of the interview participants' online civic work was carried out to validate the claims they made during the interviews.

Sample and Participant Recruitment

My aim was to draw my primary sample from the population of women who have been active and sustained participants in transnational online civic communities/platforms that are global/ transnational in scope, both with respect to issues addressed and the nature of membership/participation. Also, these websites had to be supportive of connections and interactions among their members and accepting of user-generated content. Some examples of these kind of websites are takingitglobal.org, World Bank Youthink, Avaaz, and peace x peace (see Appendix Four for a complete list of websites included in this study). Thus, I selected websites that actually offered participants of online communities the opportunity to make connections, join networks, and take action, rather than websites that just provided information or were just an online extension of an off-line organization. Chapter Four gives a detailed profile of such a web-sphere. During the initial stage of my study, I identified these websites using

search engines, following links on other websites, and by using personal references. I delimited the site selection to those operating in English because of the limitations imposed by my language proficiency and the limited budget of the study.

Online Survey of Women Participants

The online survey had two objectives: one, to grasp the salient demographic and civic characteristics of the kind of women who participate in such communities, and two, as a recruiting tool for volunteers for in-depth interviews. I designed and posted the survey using Qualtrics on selected websites (see Appendix One B for the survey questionnaire and Appendix Four for the list of websites selected). The average time to respond to the survey was about five to seven minutes and the respondents had to click on appropriate answers from a list of probable choices.

I had emailed and contacted the administrator of each selected website for permission to post the survey. I encountered four different policies on different websites with respect to posting a research survey: one, no response; two, the administrators would not post the survey but if I became a member of the website I could post the survey on my profile or get another member to post it; three, the administrators would post the survey on their website; and four, the administrators would not post the survey on the website but would share it on the website's Facebook page and through its Twitter account. I agreed to whatever option the administrator offered.

The uneven response from websites produced a limitation for my sample selection because the women included in the sample reached me either through the websites that posted my survey or through the sharing of my survey on social media. As a result, participants in several websites that were part of my original list (e.g., the Harry Potter Alliance, Peacejam,

UNICEF Voices of Youth, and World Banks YouThink) are not represented in the sample due to the website's policy of not posting the survey. Thus, I started with an attempt to draw a targeted purposive sample of users from the web domain that I was investigating. Because of uneven posting, and even more, because of the spread of the survey through social media, my actual sample resembled a snowball sample more than a purposive sample that was systematically carried out. The final sample still met my criteria of women who were civically interested, digitally active, and globally oriented and their consent for to be investigated in-depth provided the necessary research opportunities that an ethnography requires.

The experience of reaching participants through the Internet can be compared to a roller-coaster ride. I did not know personally any woman that participated in the survey and trying to reach them was like shooting in the dark. I had concerns about trust issues and the willingness of people to participate in research conducted by a total stranger. I was overwhelmed by the response, which ended up being 136 women from 42 different countries, a sizeable proportion of them within a week of posting the survey. The rest trickled in gradually as the survey got shared and reshared through Facebook and Twitter. The survey link was kept live from July 2013 to December 2013. The following map shows the countries of origin and locations for the survey participants.

Figure 1. Survey participants: Countries of origin and residence



SURVEY MAP

- COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
- COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE

At the end of the survey, I asked if the respondent wanted to participate in further research and if so to provide an email. These questions were aimed at recruiting volunteers for in-depth interviews and textual analysis. Out of fifty-four respondents who initially agreed to further participation, twenty-three women from fifteen different countries were finally available for in-depth interviews via Skype or phone; they allowed me to follow them online for analysis of their civic participation. The following map shows the countries of origin and residence for the 23 interview participants.

Figure 2. Interview participants: Countries of origin and residence



COUNTRIES OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
- COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE

In-depth Interviews

The following graphs show some demographic characteristics and years of civic engagement for my 23 interview participants.

Figure 3. Interview participants: Age

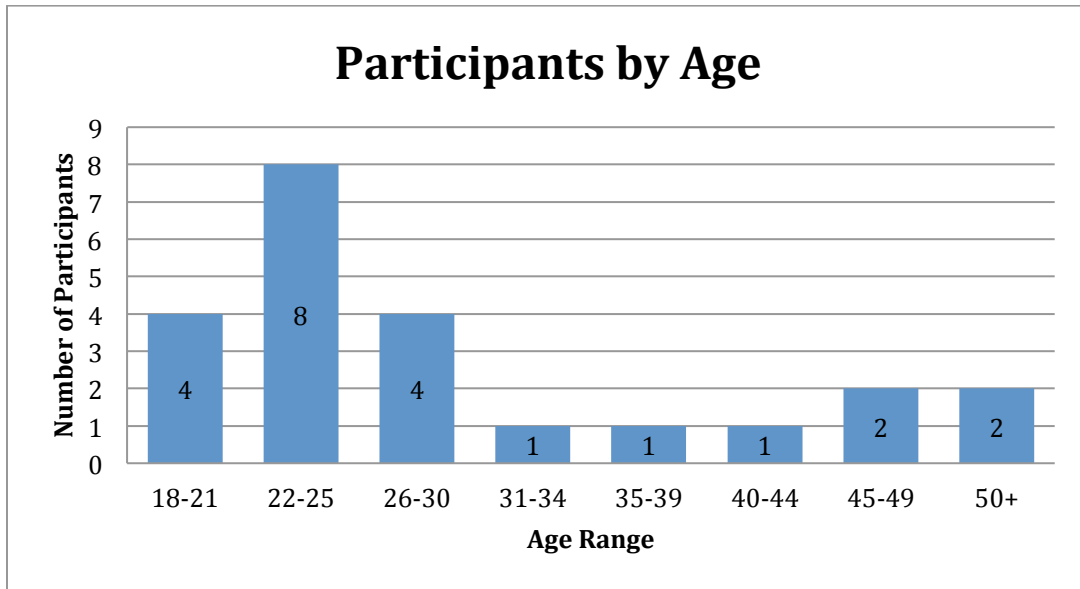


Figure 4: Interview participants: Background

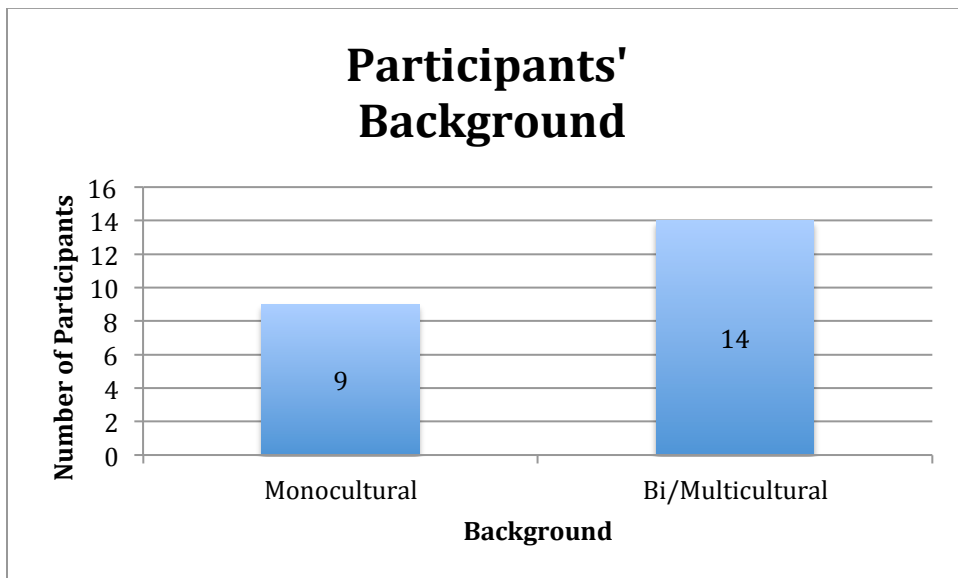


Figure 5. Interview participants: Use of social media websites

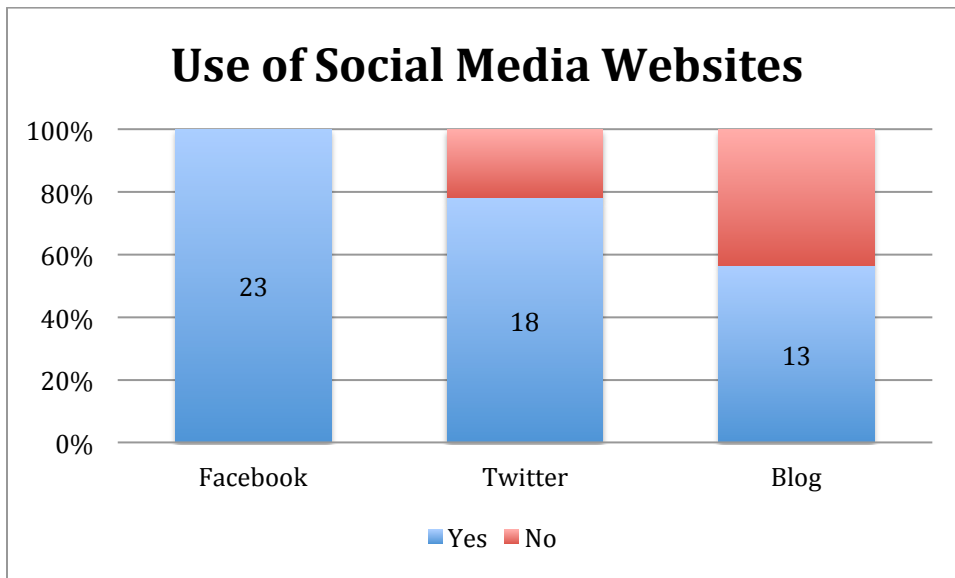
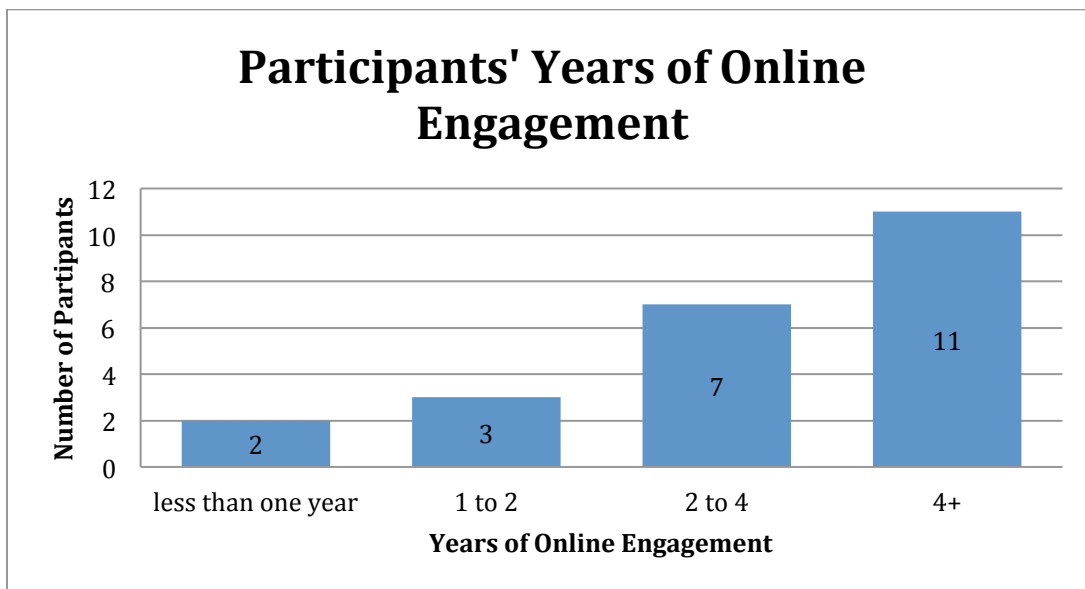


Figure 6. Interview participants: Years of online engagement



In-depth interviewing is a widely used method in ethnography; it has also been popular in online ethnographies or “netnographies.” Kozinets (2010) argues that in-depth interviews allow

netnographic researchers to “broaden their understanding of what they observe online” and to examine “the relationship between online community activities and other social activities in the community member’s life” (p. 47). In-depth interviews help the researcher to understand the participants’ lived experiences, the meanings they attach to these experiences, and the significance of the phenomenon under study in the lifeworlds of the participants from their own perspectives. Interviewing is a suitable method for bringing people’s own discursive strategies of civic participation into an analysis, as suggested by Dahlgren (2003).

It was a challenging task to get participants for in-depth interviews in my study, as visible from the number of women who initially volunteered and the number of women I ultimately interviewed. Out of 54 women who had provided their email ids in the survey, 22 did not respond to my follow-up emails (despite several attempts), three women backed out after reading the consent form, one turned out to be a man, and personal circumstances like travel, approaching examinations, or delivery came in the way of participation for four. There was also one who never showed up for the interview after making an appointment.

The interviews, with the exception of three, were conducted via Skype. The other three interviews were conducted through Gmail chat and email response because either the Internet was expensive in those locations or the infrastructural problems did not support long conversations on Skype. Different time zones and uneven audio quality on Skype were two major challenges that I faced in conducting online interviews. These semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted using an interview protocol (see Appendix 2A for the interview protocol). Most interviews lasted for about ninety minutes to two hours, some for two sessions of an hour each. The follow-up was easy due to the use of email and social media. It was very often that my participants and I would be online at the same time and I could quickly ask a question or

clarify something by a quick chat on Facebook, Gmail, or Skype. I was very fortunate in that the women who formed the sample for my interviews were excited about their participation and were invested in the success of the study. They made several adjustments to their schedules, kept awake until the wee hours of morning to chat with me, kept me posted on relevant information, and kept in touch throughout the period of the study. All the Skype interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then analyzed using the qualitative software NVivo.

Analysis of Global Civic Websites as Sites of Transcultural Citizenship

In Chapter Four, I discuss the analysis of the global civic web-sphere based on the examination of selected websites (see Appendix Four for a list of websites included in the analysis). The websites included in the sample for this analysis were drawn in the following ways:

(a). The initial pool of websites, was identified through Internet searches in the beginning of the study in 2010. This set of websites and their Facebook pages were also used to post the online survey.

(b). Some websites were selected from those that the participants in the survey mentioned as the five most important online communities for them.

(c). Some websites were added from those that my participants mentioned during the interviews and the list they sent me after the interviews.

I visited these websites frequently and informally throughout the period of my study and especially from 2012 to 2014. Formal examination of selected websites, however, was carried out three times during the study: first, in 2011, when I took memos, observed, and hung out on them; second, in 2012, soon after I conducted the survey and also after I interviewed each woman and observed her online participation; and third, between December 2013 and April

2014, when I analyzed each site formally using the key affordances of the Internet and wrote up the findings. For each website I visited, I analyzed the home page, each parent tab from the drop down menu (e.g., “about,” “projects,” “themes,” “mission,” “people,” etc.), membership/community, and hyperlinks to other organizations. I induced several affordances of the Internet and then organized them conceptually as a result of the interviews I conducted. I was particularly paying attention to affordances that encouraged expression, networking, and collaboration. From this working framework I used the following conceptual scheme of the Internet’s affordances to analyze the global civic websites that I present in Chapter Four. I was specifically looking at

1. Collaborative knowledge construction/user-generated content
2. The ease of multi-modal expression, publication and distribution
3. Transborder networks
4. Real time as well as asynchronous communication
5. Many-to-many communication
6. Archiving
7. Hyperlinks

I examined what civic activities were possible through participation on these websites and what the members actually did on the site. I also looked at how the sites recognized and constructed the members and if they specifically recognized them as global or world citizens.

Textual Analysis of the Interview Participants’ Online Civic Work

Interviews and textual analysis are methods complementary to each other; the first helps us to see the phenomenon from the participants' points-of-view -- to see what meanings they attach to things, actions, and events -- while the second helps us to interpret their public

engagement through a theoretical lens. A qualitative textual analysis of the participants' online civic engagement was used as a supplementary method to in-depth interviews in my study. The purpose of textual analysis in this study was not to conduct an extensive content analysis, but rather, to follow the digital footprints of selected women to find examples that support or challenge the claims that these women made in their interviews and the normative arguments made by scholars about digital and global citizenships.

I collected samples of the online participation of the 23 women I interviewed that broadly fell into the "civic" category for a minimum of one month after each interview. The textual sample included Facebook pages, Twitter comments, posts on other social media, blogs, and the articles they wrote online. I included text, photographs, video, podcasts, comments, and signals (e.g., "liking" a post) as part of my analysis. To be able to collect these samples, I friended my participants on Facebook, followed them on Twitter, Tumblr and Pinterest, subscribed to feeds that these participants subscribed to (e.g., AWID, Avaaz, Amnesty International, etc.) and frequently visited the websites to which they referred me.

The questions that guide my textual analysis are categorized under the following broad themes:

- (a). Roles, engagement, and activities on the platform: for example, what are the different roles that a woman takes on the platform/in the online community; how does she rhetorically frame her role as a citizen; what contexts and issues does she evoke in this process; who is her audience/public; what is the purpose for and what are the different ways of engaging her audience; which connections and networks are made; what types of responses does she receive; and what are the different direct and indirect outcomes of this engagement, as visible on the site?
- (b). The connections between the global and the local: for example, how do local and

global identities, issues, cultural aspects, loyalties interact in a woman's online discourse; what offline connections are associated with a particular online platform/community; and, how do these connections influence day-to-day citizenship practices?

Analysis of Data

For analyzing the data, I used the grounded theory approach in combination with the analytical framework that I developed based on an inductive reading of my data and in response to previously existing frameworks that could assist in evaluating online civic cultures; for example, Dahlgren's (2011) framework of civic culture, a framework developed by Bennett et al. (2011), and also that of Plummer (2003). I discuss these frameworks later in the chapter. Intersectionality is another analytical approach, guided by feminist theory, that I apply in my data analysis.

Grounded Theory

The study employs grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as an approach to data analysis because it is especially relevant for examining an emergent phenomenon. The data and inductive analysis of data inform theory building rather than an overarching theory guiding the analysis of data. Grounded theory does not ignore existing theory, but rather than imposing the theory on the data, insights from the data are given importance in the analysis. Following the spirit of grounded theory, I engaged in a parallel exercise of inductively reading my data and at the same time looking for previous theoretical work that resonated with my data.

Analytic Framework for Studying the Enactment of Transcultural Citizenship

My goal was to develop an analytic framework that serves a dual purpose: one, to help analyze the different modes of enacting online citizenship for individuals who self identify as global citizens, and two, to provide the dimensions for analyzing the performance of online

communities/websites in facilitating the enactment of transcultural citizenship through the affordances/opportunities offered by the Internet. Although I expect that the framework can be used to study the online enactment of citizenship in different contexts, the focus in the present research is on transcultural citizenship.

I have drawn from Bennett et al. (2011), Dahlgren (2011), and Plummer's (2003) work in developing the analytic framework for my study. Bennett et al.'s framework for analyzing civic websites is built around civic competencies required for effective online civic participation, while Dahlgren's framework addresses the broader concept of civic culture. Plummer's framework examines processes that generate new public spheres. After an extensive literature review, Bennett et al. (2011) arrive at four key categories of competencies necessary for effective citizenship. Each of these skill categories contains various competencies thought important to being a good citizen (DC, or Dutiful Citizenship, as well as AC, or Actualizing Citizenship, skill sets):

1. The *Knowledge* necessary to be an effective citizen.
2. The *Expression* skills needed to communicate effectively
3. The skills needed for *Joining Publics* (groups or networks) that can emerge, coordinate, and organize around an issue or candidate.
4. The skills needed to *Take Action* to address a specific issue or policy (p. 841).

Dahlgren's (2011) perspective on civic cultures is interested in "the processes of how people develop into citizens, how they come to see themselves as members and potential participants in societal development, and how such empowered senses of self are maintained" (p.13). The civic culture framework has undergone several revisions over the last five years with additions and refinements to the dimensions included. According to the latest version in

Dahlgren (2011), “[t]he framework is modeled as a circuit with six mutually reciprocal dimensions, each opening up an avenue of empirical research” (p.11). These six dimensions are:

1. Knowledge
2. Values
3. Trust
4. Spaces
5. Practices and skills
6. Identities.

Ken Plummer (2003), while examining “intimate citizenship,” identifies five generic processes through which new public spheres can appear:

1. Imagining/empathizing
2. Vocalizing
3. Investing identities through narrative
4. Creating social worlds and communities of support
5. Creating a culture of public problems (p. 81).

Although not limited to online public spheres, these processes can be helpful in studying how civic cultures/subcultures develop. I have modified the frameworks of Bennett et al. and Dahlgren based on an inductive primary analysis of my data. My framework goes beyond competencies and aims at examining the dimensions that influence the quality of the online enactment of global citizenship.

Knowledge and action are the two dimensions of citizenship that Bennett et al., as well as Dahlgren, consider important and I have retained both of these dimensions in my framework (I justify their inclusion later when I elaborate on my framework). I find two important dimensions

from Dahlgren's framework on civic cultures missing in the framework of Bennett et al. -- specifically, values and identities -- primarily because the framework focuses on competencies. I have included both of these dimensions in my framework. One's value system plays an important role in shaping citizenship practices. Even when we acknowledge cultural differences, we still hold onto assumptions about values like tolerance, freedom of speech, and equality as important for sustaining democratic participation. What unique values the global citizens bring with them, whether cultural and regional differences influence values considered important by these citizens, and what values the online civic spaces encourage are important questions to consider in analyzing the online enactment of global citizenship. Similarly, based on his review of the literature in the area of cultural theory, Dahlgren (2003) argues that the dimension of identity has become a key to understanding citizenship as a mode of social agency. How do people see themselves as citizens influences their civic participation, so the processes and strategies involved in imagining and expressing oneself as a global citizen and acting as one are vital components of participation on global civic websites.

I have retained the dimension of Expression in the framework by Bennett et al., but have added a separate category of dialogue/deliberation in my framework. When I first started studying online civic websites, a striking observation was the vast amount of individual expression found on these sites. Providing spaces for different voices is an important requirement for democratic participation and hence expression is certainly one of the important dimensions. Opportunities for expression, however, do not equate to opportunities for dialogue and do not guarantee serious deliberation. Plummer (2003, p.87) argues "a good citizen does not speak in monologues but inhabits a world where people are interrelated and able to communicate with one another." Dialogue with diverse others is a crucial element in global citizenship,

especially so when citizenship practices are defined as predominantly discursive and relational, as they are by my participants. I have eliminated trust as a separate category, as it is in Dahlgren's framework, and intend to study it under the larger category of "values." Trust is indeed an important democratic value and a crucial consideration in any online participation that requires personal disclosure. Since virtual participation lacks some of the concrete clues available in physical interaction, involves identity play (even when not commonly observed), and makes entry in and exit out of virtual communities relatively easy, the building of trust online is challenging and this affects the quality of participation. I do not, however, see trust as separate from the larger cluster of values.

Keeping the online and global aspects of citizenship in focus, I propose the following framework for studying the online enactment of citizenship that can be applied to individual engagement, as well as the role of websites/online civic communities in facilitating engagement. Again, in my study, this framework will be used with a focus on the global dimension of online citizenship enactment.

Seven dimensions the transcultural citizenship framework. The framework for online transcultural citizenship that I propose includes seven dimensions:

1. Identities/Affinities
2. Values
3. Knowledge/Information
4. Connection/Communities/Networks
5. Expression/Voice
6. Dialogue/Deliberation
7. Action (this includes also a sense of efficacy)

There is, of course, frequent overlap in these dimensions when one observes online civic participation. For example, sharing information can be part of expression, dialogue, and also action. In the following sections, I discuss each dimension of my framework in order to explain its relevance in studying the online enactment of global citizenship and to identify the parameters that contribute to the quality of performance in each dimension.

1. Identities/affinities

It is now well accepted that our identity consists of multiple dimensions and that in different situations, different dimensions of our identity get foregrounded. Gender, sexuality, class, race, and religion are some identity dimensions that have been the foundation of various social movements. If global citizens question national identity as the sole basis of citizenship, it becomes a valid question as to what other identity dimensions play important roles in the enactment of global citizenship, and if different affinities and identity dimensions are evoked in different online contexts.

Parameters

Individual: Dimensions of identity foregrounded (gender, age, race, class, nation, ethnicity; personal, professional, civic, political, activist; local, national, global), affinities formed based on different dimensions of identity, inclusions and exclusions based on identity.

Website: Identities that form the basis of participation on the website, discursive strategies for evoking civic identities, inclusion and exclusion based on identity dimensions.

2. Values

Some of the core values that the Western liberal model of democracy and citizenship are founded on -- like individual freedom, liberty, popular sovereignty, the pursuit of happiness -- are considered universal democratic values. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the

many variations on democratic practices around the world (for example, social democracy or inclusive democracy) would give the same values equal weight. Besides, practices rooted in the so-called undemocratic values like hate speech, bigoted thinking, a lack of tolerance for oppositional ideologies, and incivility are rampant on the Internet. When participants from many different parts of the world come together as global civic communities, what values emerge as the shared core values among cultural and regional differences, and what values govern online participation? These are interesting questions to probe, as are the mechanisms by which certain values are encouraged on global civic websites.

Parameters:

Individual: Values participants bring to the online community; for example, democratic participation, empathy, solidarity, civility, respect, openness to diverse cultures and views, freedom of expression, tolerance, privacy, trust, etc. (negative values like incivility and bias should not be ruled out from examination).

Website: Values encouraged and supported on the website and the mechanisms through which support is expressed.

3. *Information/knowledge*

“Informed citizens” have always been considered as assets in democracies and the assumption that civic knowledge about public issues enhances meaningful participation has been at the foundation of formal and non-formal attempts at civic education. Civic knowledge and information can be acquired through formal school-based education, the media, or through lived experiences. Haste points out that, unlike the earlier approach to civic engagement that stressed the acquisition of knowledge as a prerequisite to civic participation, the new approaches recognize that participation itself produces knowledge. This is certainly plausible with online

civic participation, but Internet-based circulation and the sharing of knowledge/information has its own issues that can have bearing on the quality of civic participation. The abundance of information online and the 24/7 influx of information through various online platforms makes information management a challenging task. This may result in more “arbitrary” rather than strategic exposure to information online. Even when participants have global interests, they do not have an understanding of the context surrounding each stream of information. The lack of context creates its own problems with the processing and employing of the information received. Similarly, when one is sharing information, even when one has a sense of one’s imagined audience, it is blurred and incomplete with no clear expectations for how the information will be received or employed. Finally, having multiple sources of information is considered a positive attribute of the Internet, but in reality, the tendency to turn to the sources that reinforce rather than challenge one’s world view is common. Also, one may not have the necessary literacy to meaningfully understand and employ all of the information that one encounters online. Determining the authenticity and trustworthiness of sources of information becomes a personal burden and challenge online when the conventional authority of gatekeepers is absent. Under these challenges, knowledge and information emerges as a key dimension in analyzing the online enactment of global citizenship.

Parameters:

Individual: Type of information received and shared, sources of information, topics/issues and the form in which information is received/shared; if sharing and receiving of information is accompanied by other processes like analysis, reflection, synthesis, etc. and if there is action taken based on the information.

Website: Type of information available, presence or absence of contextual background

(for example, through hyperlinks, background essays, data), who is allowed to contribute/share information, topics, sources, and forms of information, who can access information and if any special literacy /skills are required; how frequently information is updated.

4. Connection/community/networks

One's civic identity is shaped in connection with others. Dewey's (1925, 1938) observation that individuals come together and become public through common problems and conjoined action is still valid even when instead of simultaneous physical place-based action, the conjoined action through Internet-based communities may happen in dispersed time and space. A personal problem becomes a public issue when it gets expressed collectively on a public platform and engenders the possibility of collective action. One attraction of online communities is that participants can break the fixed and limiting boundaries of primordial and geographic communities to forge connections with those who are geographically distant but emotionally/ideologically close. The global civic websites offer opportunities to network, connect, and collaborate across the world. How do participants use these opportunities? What kind of networks do they form and to what purpose? How strong or weak are these online ties? These are some of the questions that guide my analysis.

Parameters:

Individual: Geographic scope of connections, the basis of forming networks (identity, issues, interests, etc.), kind of networks (friends, colleagues, professional, followers, issue-based), nature of bonds (weak or strong), purpose and use of connections and networks.

Website: Opportunities and channels for making connections, ease of making and maintaining connections, geographic scope, opportunities to collaborate through the site.

5. Expression/Voice

Freedom of expression and representation of diverse voices are, as stated earlier, hallmarks of democratic societies. Also, one's effectiveness as a citizen largely depends upon one's skills to communicate in public spaces about values, ideologies, issues, concerns, and solutions. Several scholars (Mitra and Watts, 2002 for example) have lauded the Internet for providing democratic spaces for expression, where more opportunities exist for the marginalized and the powerless to express their voices. Of course, a lack of digital infrastructure, communication competencies, and weak civic agency can diminish this potential. "Who is listening?" is an important question associated with expression, especially online expression, so the question of audience is a crucial question. Important questions in my analysis are: whose voices do we hear on global civic websites, what are these voices expressing, what communication competencies are vital for expression, and who is listening to these voices?

Parameters:

Individual: Themes/issues/concerns that emerge through expression; audience; format, media; purpose of expression.

Website: Themes/issues/concerns that emerge through expression; geographic reach provided to the voices expressed, media, level of moderation, who can express/whose voices are heard, skills or expertise required for expression, available audience (peers, policy makers, government, politicians, etc.).

6. Dialogue/deliberation

As we acknowledge the increasing plurality and diversity of participants in the public sphere, dialogue acquires a heightened significance in building bridges between contesting world views. We have already experienced the futility of imposing a universal ethical code on cultures

across the world. Culture wars, conflicts, inequalities and power struggles, ideological differences, and variations in moral boundaries form the challenging terrain that a global citizen has to negotiate. Plummer (2003) suggests, “Built into the heart of all contemporary ideas of citizenship must be the idea of dialogue. The capacity to discuss reasonably, to talk with opposing others -- in short, to dialogue -- is a sine qua non of being a citizen in the late modern world” (p. 85). Whether global websites offer mechanisms and opportunities for dialogue and whether participants on the global civic websites enter into genuine dialogue with their global counterparts are important indications for examining the claims of global citizenship.

Parameters:

Individual: With whom, how often, and through which mechanisms (comments, initiating threads, participating in debates, asking and responding to questions, helping to solve problems) dialogue takes place; topics, issues, and how they relate to why the participants engage in dialogue.

Website: Opportunities and mechanisms for engaging in dialogue and debates, whether dialogue is spontaneous or moderated, geographic scope of dialogue, possibility of building a sustained dialogue.

7. Action/Efficacy

Analyzing action with reference to online spaces is a tricky issue as action can take multiple forms and channels. Additionally, some online actions are just online and predominantly symbolic in nature, while others could have an offline component. Some actions happen only offline but through online connections and channels. Online action has often been looked down upon as “clicktivism” or “slacktivism,” a low-interest, low-involvement, and low-risk type of action, in short an inferior version of the so-called “real” action. Issues of local

context, cultural and political literacy, and power imbalances pose serious questions about validity, sustainability, and desirability of global/transnational activism, especially through Internet-based networks. Amidst these challenges, relevant questions for examining the claims of global citizenship through Internet-based participation are: what do the participants define as action, how do they justify their definition, what value do they ascribe to online action and do their online actions have offline components?

Parameters:

Individual: The kind of individual or collective action (issue-based or relational, symbolic or concrete, online or also offline) the participants take through their online participation, geographic scope of action, and channels for taking action.

Website: The kind of action the website facilitates (issue-based, Individual/collective, symbolic/artistic/concrete, online/offline), geographic scope, and channels. The nature of support the website offers for supporting action, whether it be through funds, expertise, logistics, networking for collective action, platforms, events for advocacy, petitions, and announcements.

Intersectionality as an Analytical Lens

Intersectionality is an important feminist theoretical lens that I use for my data analysis. Brah and Phoenix (2004) regard the concept of intersectionality as “signifying the complex, irreducible, varied and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation-economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential-intersect in historically specific contexts” (p. 76). This concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands. Collins (1990) describes intersectionality as a “matrix of domination” (p. 454) in which all identities based on social group membership interact with each other to create life situations that are qualitatively different depending on one’s

location in the matrix. Also central to the definition of intersectionality is that identities are couched within status and power relations. Intersecting identities create instances of both opportunity and oppression. The relative importance of identities cannot be ranked in some linear fashion. I agree with Collins (1990) here. Traditionally, intersectional projects have focused only on subjects occupying the locations of disadvantage whose experiences and voices need to be acknowledged, but I would argue for a broader use of the concept in research because often a person privileged over one axis is disadvantaged over the other. Despite the fact that in its original conceptualization, structural and institutional factors have been valorized and individual agency is downplayed, I see one of the major advantage of the intersectionality approach as being that with careful research design, individual, institutional, and larger structural dimensions can all be given due importance.

I will now briefly explain why intersectionality is a relevant concept for my dissertation. I have studied women's participation on transnational civic engagement websites and their culturally-situated quotidian experiences of digital and transnational citizenship. Thus, gender is an important analytical category for me. As a qualitative researcher, I would like to bring out all possible nuances of these women's realities with respect to their engagement with transnational online civic platforms. I would also make sure that I represent their lived experience from their own subjective viewpoint. My analysis is highly enhanced by addressing complexities of gender as a category of analysis and its interaction with other axes of identity like class, ethnicity, and geopolitical location, among others. Intersectionality, however, is not an easy concept to grapple with, especially when translated to methodology. I looked to some of the previous research using intersectional approach and followed some of their guidelines.

Bowleg (2008), for example, suggests the grounded theory approach with open, axial,

and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In her research, she uses open coding to broadly code passages using multiple and overlapping codes like heterosexism, violence, sexism, intersectionality, etc.; in the axial and selective coding phase, she refines each of the separate codes, and during the selective coding phase, she further refines the codes to reflect a specific dimension of an intersectional experience (p. 319). Bilge (2009) also stresses the importance of data-driven inductive analysis and not assigning a priori centrality to any category. She uses grounded theory and a generic intersectionality template to manage intersectionality in her research. Based on several studies attempting intersectional analysis, I followed the following strategies for deploying intersectionality as a research approach:

1. Think of intersectionality at the beginning, and not just in the analysis stage.
2. Ask good questions during the interviews and textual analysis that facilitate intersectional thinking but do not impose a priori categories on respondents.
3. Enact multi-level analysis in order to interpret intersectionality data by bridging the context of the intersection of individual biography and structural inequality.

Methodological and Ethical Concerns Associated with the Study

The study raised several methodological and ethical concerns because of the global sample and the digital data collection methods.

Methodological Concerns

Although I was convinced that, despite being carried out via the Internet, the study adequately fulfills the important requirements of a multi-sited or translocal ethnography, there were several challenges to data collection and analysis. Kozinets (2010) warns that the adaptation of ethnographic techniques to the online environment is not straightforward. The following are some of the reasons that complicate online ethnography.

1. The ephemeral nature of online data. Webpages and social media spaces are not static and their content changes rapidly. Thus, the only way to save data is by taking screenshots or converting pages into PDFs, but even that cannot do justice to the massive content that emerges on websites and disappears to make room for new content.

2. Validity of the sampling process. After I posted the survey on the websites or Facebook pages, or sent the survey link to the website administrators, it was given a life of its own. I had no control over its trajectories and thus no complete control over who got included in my sample. I came to know during the in-depth interviews that some of my participants had reached the survey link through their Facebook and Twitter accounts -- when the websites shared it, when some individual members visited the website, or when the website's social media pages shared the link on their own accounts.

3. The problem of plenty. Each individual's social media pages led me to several other links, other social media accounts, their "likes" and various sources on their RSS feeds. Similarly, each website home page had several hyperlinks and each had Twitter accounts and Facebook pages of their own. Again, all of these constantly changed. It was difficult to determine just when to stop collecting data.

4. The nature of identities online. Civic identity was an area of interest in my study. Identity development is a dynamic ongoing process. An individual's identity influences his/her civic participation but civic participation also shapes identity. Thus, my participants' online identities did not remain static during the course of the study, and so I could capture only a slice of this phenomenon at a certain point or maybe points. In social media spaces there is also a conflation of personal, social, and civic identities and activities. Only thick description could help bring out some of the nuances of this conflation.

Ethical Concerns

Although the study has been conducted with a strict adherence to the guidelines provided by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, there were several rounds of discussion with the IRB before the study got approval. Kozinets (2010, p.140) raises several questions that a researcher has to consider while doing research online:

Are online communities private or public spaces? How do we get the informed consent of online community members? Who actually owns the online data posted on newsgroups or blogs?... Should we use conversations that we participate in or “overhear” in a chat room? Are there different ethical rules for different online media? Is it ethical or legal to record real time interactions such as chat without permission? Do age and vulnerability matter online? In media in which identity is difficult to verify, how can we be sure about the age and vulnerability of research participation? Do international boundaries influence the way a netnographer collects data and publishes research?

For my study, the main areas of contention with the IRB were deciding what is private and public in an online context, ensuring the safety and privacy of the participants, and the issue of informed consent. The IRB did not want me to quote directly from any online expression that I observed. My argument is that since the study focuses on civic websites that are concerned with public issues, people write on these websites treating them as public spaces. The public dimension is an important aspect that separates the civic from the personal. Taking the middle ground, I have not quoted any individual expression from the websites but have used paraphrased versions or summaries.

The IRB was concerned about the privacy of the participants and wanted to ensure that individual identities were not revealed. I endorse the importance of protecting privacy of research subjects. This posed a dilemma, however, because except for three participants, all the participants in my study insisted that I use their real names. They claimed that they were proud of their work and their ideas, and that they wanted the ownership of their expressions that I would share with my readers. I understand the IRB's concern because sometimes participants do not understand what they are getting into, and sometimes misquoting or misrepresenting does happen in the course of reporting. Since my participants insisted on using their real identities, I had to play my role as a researcher sensitively and reflectively. The women in my study welcomed me with open arms, opened their social media spaces to me, and candidly shared their opinions, life experiences, and reflections. As a researcher, I had to use my discretion in deciding when to quote, paraphrase, or summarize; when individual identities were important to reveal and when they had to be concealed. I had to guard myself from the common pitfall of not being critical enough and painting an overly positive picture just because the participants' identities were known.

The issue of informed consent is complicated because of the nature of multi-modal content online. I had obtained oral consent from all my participants for using their online expression for my research, but when they are participating in online discussions, commenting on other people's posts, posing in a group photograph, or appearing in a video there are others involved. In such situations, I had to make sure that I did not reveal the identity of those who had not given me consent to use their online expression. It is easy for the researchers to lurk online without the participants' knowledge. Here again, my defense is the public nature of the civic websites that I studied and the conscious decision of my participants to open their social media

spaces to me.

The next five chapters present my findings based on my inductive and intersectional analysis using the grounded theory approach and also the frameworks that I have developed and discussed in this chapter. Chapter Three is based mostly on the in-depth interviews of 23 women. In this chapter, I present how these women broaden the language of citizenship and negotiate their self-identification as global citizens with their local and national citizenships. I argue that women like my participants are forming a global civic subculture that I call transcultural citizenship. The chapter unpacks the concept of transcultural citizenship and demonstrates why it is a concept worthy of academic attention. Chapter Four examines the global civic websites with respect to the affordances that the Internet offers and how these affordances facilitate the websites' performance as the spaces and tools for transcultural citizenship, while Chapter Five, Six, and Seven use the data from the online survey, in-depth interviews, and qualitative textual analysis to give a thick description and analysis of my participants' pathways and processes for becoming digital and transcultural citizens and for doing transcultural citizenship using the Internet. This analysis is based on the seven dimensions of transcultural citizenship as an online civic culture.

CHAPTER 3: CITIZENSHIP 2.0-- RECONFIGURING CITIZENSHIP UNDER GLOBALIZATION AND THE INTERNET

This chapter examines the changing terrain of citizenship under the influence of two powerful forces - i.e., globalization and the Internet - that allow the unprecedented exchange of ideas, information, technology, and people on the world scale. This chapter uses a cultural studies approach to citizenship and is based on in-depth interviews with 23 women from 15 different countries; I specifically examine how these women conceptualize citizenship and perceive their own civic identities. My data suggest emergence of a global civic subculture that I call “transcultural citizenship,” through which members self-identify as global citizens in culturally-rooted ways; broaden the language of citizenship to include the relational, affective, and discursive ways of experiencing it; and attribute a significant role to the Internet in their experience of citizenship.

The Changing Conceptualization and Practices of Citizenship in the Context of the Networked and Globalized World

Citizenship is one of the few concepts that have remained relevant across historical and geographical lines, starting with the Greek agora to present times and in diverse regions of the world representing monarchies, democracies, and autocracies. Citizenship is also a complex concept with multiple dimensions and pluralistic interpretations. Its form, nature, and practices have evolved according the changing contexts. Defining citizenship and setting normative standards for ‘good citizens’ in universal terms has therefore always been problematic.

Rights and responsibilities, individual freedom and common good, allegiance and loyalty, inclusion and exclusion have been some of the concurrent themes associated with debates surrounding citizenship. Four aspects, however, have remained fairly constant in the dominant

discourse on citizenship: one, citizenship has been predominantly articulated in relation to a nation-state/nationhood; two, there is a 'public' component associated with being a good or valued citizen especially in democratic systems; three, citizenship is articulated in legal-political terms; and four, the process of inclusion and exclusion (insiders and outsiders; allies and enemies) has been implicitly interwoven in the articulation and practice of citizenship. The increased transnational flow of people, media, money, information, and ideas -- as well as horizontal economic networks and a converged media environment fueled by digital media technologies -- has caused these very assumptions to be increasingly questioned.

Scholars working in a range of different disciplines and coming from different perspectives have argued for the need to broaden the language of citizenship to include identities and practices so far excluded either because of the limitations embedded in conventional theories, or because these theories were designed for different times when the scale and practices of citizenship were contained within cities or nations, and digital media was not even a remote possibility. Global citizenship and digital citizenship, therefore, are two such concepts associated with the changing scale, scope, and nature of citizenship practices.

Several scholars have recognized the need for broader definitions of citizen, citizenship and citizenship practices (Beck, 1998; Bennett, 2008, Friedland, 1996; Giddens, 1998; and Stevenson, 2001) for example that resonate with contemporary global conditions. Scholars like Banaji (2008), Bennett (2008), Harris (2008), Mouffe (1999), and Papacharissi (2010) have also expressed the need to reexamine related concepts like civic engagement, the public sphere, and democratic participation in response to the changing global context, including the emergence of a digital public sphere. Because the generation born after the 1990s is widely perceived to be the most significantly influenced by globalization and new media technologies, much of the research

on new citizenship practices focuses on youth. Beck (1998, p.5), for example, draws our attention to the changing citizenship practices of young people today in what he calls “the politics of youthful antipolitics”: “[W]anting to have fun while engaging in grassroots opposition, enjoying one’s own life supplemented and made credible by self-organized concern for others, which has broken free of large institutions, tying together things that seem mutually exclusive: egoism and altruism, self-realization and active compassion.” According to Beck, for today’s young people, self-assertion, enjoying oneself, and caring for others are not mutually exclusive; they in fact strengthen one another. Dahlgren (2011) argues that “while civic engagement among the young in the West continues to decline in regard to traditional party politics, we can note that the domain of alternative politics, with its social movements, networked activists, and spontaneous discussions, continue to grow” (p.15).

There have also been studies demonstrating the changing terrain of feminist public engagement. Ferree and Tripp (2006) observe that transnational contexts are increasingly important venues for feminist work. Drawing inspiration from Benedict Anderson's (1983) "imagined community," feminist scholars stress the myriad of ways that women who may never meet can draw from each other and organize across differences (Mackie, 2001; Mohanty, 2003; Naples & Desai, 2002); women from global South are in the forefront of this change.

Several new models of citizenship beyond the well-known models like “rights and duties,” “town-hall,” (Carpini et al., 2004) or “communitarian” (Delanty, 2002) have emerged in response to the new demands. Stevenson’s articulations of “cultural citizenship” (Stevenson, 2001) and Plummer’s “intimate citizenship” (Plummer, 2003) provide fresh angles for examining citizenship and civic engagement. Cultural citizenship argues for the centrality of culture, cultural experiences, and cultural expression in the enactment of citizenship, while the notion of

intimate citizenship addresses the increasing public contestation and policy decisions around issues of intimacy -- gender, sexuality, body, and relationships, for example -- that were previously considered only part of the private or social domains. Plummer, in fact, suggests that new personal and social identities, such as test-tube babies, gay married couples, or single parents, may generate new civic identities (2003). As can be seen in current debates the world over, much public deliberation takes place over the fact that women's bodies represent the prime site for debates on rape, reproductive rights, and motherhood, and many of these debates have taken place online.

Another non-conventional concept of citizenship is the radical concept of the "sovereign citizen" that does not accept any legal constraints posed by the municipal, state, or federal government. Banaji (2008) questions scholarly assumptions about the inherently benevolent nature of civic engagement and action and asks, "Could apathy, a refusal to vote, civil disobedience, and /or mass resistance to government policies be more democratic alternatives than state-sanctioned or authoritarian "civic" action?" (p. 543). Harris (2004) has documented several cases of DIY rebellious civic action by young women that counter the acceptable government-sanctioned definition of civic engagement and her findings support Banaji's argument about young people's leaning towards non-authoritarian civic action.

Even when individuals do not adopt a model of radical citizenship, practices associated with being a good citizen have shifted with the times and in the context of digital landscapes. Markham and Baym (2009), for example, claim that in the new media landscape citizenship does not occur in one bounded site. The new citizenship is convergent, multimodal, and happens through private, public, and social practices. Bennett et al. (2010) discuss the new model of citizenship as "actualizing citizenship" (as compared to the older model of "dutiful citizenship"),

which takes into account both the influence of globalization and online networks. They define actualizing citizenship as “personally expressive politics animated by social networks where information and action tend to be integrated and authenticated in trusted peer-to-peer relationships that promote engagement” (p.395).

Papacharissi (2010) observes a tendency to explain the new public sphere using outdated concepts and vocabulary and has argued for a new vocabulary and new models of political participation in the digital public sphere. For example, the much respected concept of deliberative democracy is now under challenge (Mouffe, 2005; Young, 2000) raising some fundamental questions about the limitations of this model. Young questions the focus on a narrow deliberative style that ignores the important role of other forms of communication. She identifies three such alternative forms- greeting or public address, rhetoric, and narrative- that facilitate inclusive democratic outcomes while Mouffe (2007) recognizes art as an important counter-hegemonic approach to democratic participation. It is interesting to note that these alternative forms of communication have been conventionally recognized as affective and “feminine” modes of communication that rank lower in hierarchy to the “masculine” rational-formal styles of deliberation. I have examined Young and Mouffe’s argument in an online context in Chapter Five because online spaces are changing the way civic expression takes place through the employment of multi-modal expression by ordinary people. This type of expression tends to be more spontaneous, informal, and emotional rather than formally and rationally deliberative. The non-verbal forms of expression facilitated by digital media may also be more suitable for reaching global audiences than verbal/written formal deliberation.

This brief review of scholarly literature shows the need to rethink and redefine our civic vocabulary in order to reflect the changing times and the various alternative conceptualizations

proposed by different scholars. My study is a step further in this direction. It not only explores new models and vocabularies that may reflect the contemporary world where the flows of ideas, people, and capital, and the global media technologies are changing local experiences, but examines how women in different parts of the world generate the new vocabularies of citizenship and employ them in their day-to-day citizenship experience.

Citizenship as a Lived Experience

Citizenship will continue to be a topic of research and theorization by scholars, but it is also a lived experience organically conceptualized, practiced, and experienced by citizens themselves. The cultural studies approach (discussed in detail in Chapter Two) focuses on the lived experience of people. This approach asks: How do ordinary citizens define citizenship today? Do they self-identify as global citizens and if so, under what circumstances and how do they experience global citizenship? Do they experience tension in enacting citizenship at local, national, and global levels and if so, how do they negotiate this tension? What role does the Internet play in people's perception and experience of citizenship?

I examine the above questions with reference to a specific group that self-identifies as women; these women are active in the global civic web and therefore show evidence of civic interest and digital literacy/fluency. Most of them are not full-time activists. Most of them have tertiary education, know English, and have access to the Internet and other digital technologies. I treat these women as cases of 'positive deviance' because they defy the gender based imbalance in public participation and technology use (see Chapter One). Although these women share these basic attributes, they are situated in vastly different geopolitical locations and inhabit vastly different lifeworlds. Scholars like Ferre & Tripp (2006) and Kole (2001) have pointed out the role culture, geo-political location, and national policies play in the way women define their civic

interests and experience citizenship. For example, Kole (2001), in her analysis of WomenAction in Africa, observes that women's groups in Africa use the Internet in a manner that differs from Western women -- and, also, diverse groups in Africa use it in ways that differ from each other. As Coleman and Blumler (2009) argue, political citizens “are constituted through complex interactions between their own life experiences, traditions to collective action, structures of opportunity and available discourses of thinking and acting politically” (p.5). My participants vary greatly on how all of these dimensions intersect to shape their experience of citizenship and I expect my qualitative approach to bring out these complex intersections through multiple individual perspectives.

Broadening the Language of Citizenship

Representative democracy, the most visible form of citizen participation across the world at present valorizes electoral participation and therefore, voting figures prominently in discourse and research on citizenship. Since national citizenship automatically includes some and excludes others, and also calls for the citizens to defend the nation when necessary (one reason why women have been considered inferior citizens is their perceived non-participation as warriors and soldiers), loyalty to one’s country and contributing to the nation's resources through labor and taxes are also important dimensions of a conventional notion of citizenship. My findings show that all the women in my study define citizenship in a much broader way than just through paying taxes, being loyal to one’s country, and voting in elections. Their reconfiguring of citizenship reflects the contemporary need to forge relationships with diverse others, as well as the important role that new media technologies have taken in our increasingly networked lives. Age, exposure to scholarly debates on citizenship, and lived experiences are some of the factors

that influence how the women in my study define citizenship and perceive their own civic identities.

Several women in my study speak about how their concept of citizenship has evolved with age and experience, and has been influenced by college courses in liberal education. Helen, the youngest participant and a recent high school graduate from a small town in South Africa says,

I think the more I become aware of it [the concept] does change... the older I get the more I learn...Ummm (laughs) lets see... I never used to have any opinion about citizenship and I have one now (laughs)... Earlier the things that didn't use to bother me like how people conduct themselves in public and what they do or do not do for their country now actually bother me and I think...they have to kind of earn the right.

Nadia- a French-Moroccan journalist from Morocco, Laura- a Venezuelan Ph.D. student, English teacher, and a blogger living in France, Cristina- a Ph.D. candidate and a feminist activist from Romania, Sania- a Pakistani-American freelance writer, Saumya- an Indian-American undergraduate student from the U.S. Graciela- an Internet Governance activist and publisher from Brazil, Yohana- a social media professional from Brazil, and Gulab- an Indian-American DIY activist from the U.S. are among my participants who mention being exposed to debates on nationalism, culture, and identity through college-level courses in sociology, political science, and the humanities; they ascribe much importance to this education in their approach to citizenship. Lived experiences, such as living as an immigrant, witnessing or participating in a political event, or being a product of bicultural upbringing or a violent family environment, also shape women's perception of citizenship and civic interests as demonstrated by my participants.

My participants challenge the conventional notion of citizenship in three ways: one, they see citizenship as a relationship with fellow human beings rather than with states or governments (some broaden the relationship to include the environment and the planet); two, they see participation, engagement, involvement, and deliberation shaped by critical thinking as important to the practice of citizenship; and three, they call for citizenship to be a matter of choice and not as imposed or bestowed by others.

The Relational Notion of Citizenship

My study shows that as women become older and develop a more critical outlook, they view citizenship as more of a relationship with fellow human beings rather than as one with a government. Falk (2002) suggests that there exist the twin contexts of moral and political community, and argues that the term “citizen” can refer to the formal linkages established by law, but it can also refer to the psycho-political linkages arising from patterns of aspiration and belief. It is the psycho-political linkages that are more important to my participants (see also Tarrow, 2005, pp.35-56).

According to Cristina, for example, citizenship is “trying to do good for people who surround [her]... trying to help people, think how not to damage them, to respect their problems, their issues, their opinions...It could be a person from any country.” She then pauses and adds, “I don’t know, I am kind of idealistic...” as she is aware that her concept of citizenship may not be in agreement with the conventional mainstream practices. Ginger, a Physical therapist and Yoga teacher from the U.S. and mother of three young children broadens the idea of citizenship to not only include relationships with people but also with the environment. Ginger defines citizenship as “taking proper care of our children, ourselves, and our environment.”

The relational dimension of citizenship is enacted by my participants in several different ways: through being present when others need them, showing empathy for others' problems and needs, showing solidarity for others' struggles, respecting other cultures, and trying to understand cultural differences. For Graciela, for example, it is the act of being present that defines citizenship: "Someone who is able to be present when support or solidarity is required, someone who is able to be responsible and committed, not necessarily physically but present." She further elaborates the notion of "presence": "By present I mean offering... best of your resources -- material or not -- your capacity, your time, your talents, your feelings, your efforts, your energy...I think that is being present." Graciela further claims that this can be done online.

The promotion of cross-cultural understanding is an important component of some of my participants' citizenship practices. To my participants like Yohana, Laura, Aya (a Moroccan-American student and volunteer from the U.S.), and Andrea (a journalist from Mexico and co-founder of SunFlower Post- a global blogging community of young women), respecting other ways of living, other cultures and ideas is a way of building cross-cultural relationships. Aya, for example, says, "To me, it means that to fundamentally respect your fellow citizens, you fundamentally respect their ideas, you have respect for their way of living and whenever you interact with them you interact with them in a way that you really want to understand them, and you have trust (...)." Thus, defining citizenship as a relationship with fellow human beings, rather than with governments or states, is one of the ways my participants' practices and beliefs deviate from the conventional perception of citizenship.

Participatory and Critical Citizenship

Engagement, participation, involvement, and deliberation are the terms that are frequently used in my participants' discussions of citizenship. Butin (2007) summarizes citizen

participation under two categories: one, volunteerism and civic participation, and two, as electoral engagement and political vote. Each mode of participation carries different assumptions about what it means to be a good citizen. Consumer activism is also a comparatively new mode of citizen participation. Interestingly, Butin cites research to suggest that most people engage in civic life in just one of these ways. Several scholars, however, have pointed out how these lines often blur (Beck, 2005 and Papacharissi, 2010 for example) and my findings support this.

Shahla, a university teacher from Pakistan, for example, speaks about the importance of conventional rights and responsibilities, such as voting, that are attached to citizenship, but “taking care of what is going around [her]” and “intervening when needed” are valuable practices she personally associates with citizenship. Katerina, a consultant from Kazakhstan for abolishing human trafficking says, “...I consider one is ‘civically engaged’ if s/he participates in discussions regarding the issues important for his/her society, expresses his/her opinions and suggestions, supports or protects opinions and actions of others, and/or also participates in virtual and ‘physical’ (offline) activities aimed on making changes in the society...the environment, even if the ‘society’ would be just a few houses in a district... and the ‘environment’ would be a couple of trees that needed watering.”

Having a voice, therefore, emerges as an important dimension of experiencing citizenship for my participants. “Having a say, having a feeling that this is my country, my voice matters” is how Nadia describes it. She uses examples of Morocco and France to explain why the French practice of citizenship appeals to her more: “ ...If you feel that you have no impact there, there is no citizenship...Citizenship is the feeling that you are the owner, you are not just renting it...the feeling that the ‘country belongs to you’ not just that you belong to a country...”, claims Nadia.

A crucial quality that these women associate with participation and voice is critical thinking. For Yohana, for example, the most important aspect of being a good citizen is “knowing how to think, not live a life without thinking.” The critical approach to life, shared by all of my participants, is one of the reasons they question some of the seemingly arbitrary practices associated with national citizenship and are willing to consider alternatives.

An interesting observation from my sample is that several women have chosen to pursue civic engagement through professional participation. They have chosen professions that align with their civic interest, even forsaking financial benefits; in several cases, civic and professional identities merge and reinforce each other. For example, Nadia claims, “Being a journalist itself is my civic duty, so my job is my civic duty....” Gwenn, a marketing executive and also a non-profit leader and volunteer in HIV/AIDS prevention programs from Zimbabwe, also considers her online and offline work on HIV/AIDS education and reproductive rights awareness as a form of citizenship because “[i]t is the passion that is driving you to do what you are doing for the good of the next human being; that is citizenship. For example, what I do the government can’t do. They are too busy doing other things. If I don’t do it there will be a huge gap in many young people’s lives....”, argues Gwenn. Similarly, Yohana and Andrea’s professional work as journalists, Ginger and Valerie’s (a policy analyst and blogger from the U.S.) work on maternal health, Olfa’s work in HIV/AIDS education, and Graciela’s years of work in Internet governance are all manifestations of their civic interests.

Citizenship as a Matter of Choice

Considering citizenship as a choice rather than an imposition or a favor is another way to re-conceptualize citizenship. One is conventionally required to possess certain ethnic heritage, identity markers, or family history, or fulfill some externally determined criteria for acquiring

citizenship of a city or a country. “What if you want to be some place else?” asks Nadia.

According to Nadia, “[c]itizenship is wanting to be somewhere.” In discussing how the United States was shaped by people who didn’t want to be in their countries of origin, Nadia claims that citizenship is “what has been given to you but also what you choose.” She argues that there is no one way of being French or Moroccan, points out how identity and citizenship are wrongly conflated, and finds it unacceptable that being a citizen depends more on how one is recognized by others instead of as a free choice.

The discursive choices that my participants make in order to express the way they experience citizenship resonate with Levinas’ appeal for the obligation to respond to the others and Derrida’s notion of hospitality, and especially with the feminist theory of the “ethics of care” (Held, 2005; Hutchings, 2002). “The ethics of care” is a moral theory that emphasizes care for self as well as others, especially for those who are dependent and vulnerable. It challenges the deontological/Kantian and consequentialist/utilitarian ethics, as well as the male bias of the “justice perspectives,” Gilligan (1982) is considered the founder of the ethics of care. “Originally conceived as most appropriate to the private and intimate spheres of life, care ethics has branched out as a political theory and social movement aimed at broader understanding of, and public support for, care-giving activities in their breadth and variety.” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>) The affective and relational dimensions of citizenship are visible in the theory of the ethics of care as well as in my participant’s conceptualization of citizenship.

The above discussion shows that the women in my study are viewing and experiencing citizenship in various alternative ways. For them citizenship is:

- a matter of responsibility more than rights;

- a call to be present for others when they need you;
- empathy, care, and connectedness from a purely human location;
- relationship with people, not just governments;
- sharing information, learning from other cultures;
- engaging in dialogues and shaping debates, or just talking;
- telling stories that can have an impact on peoples' lives;
- understanding others and bringing people together;
- and, showing support and solidarity.

As the above list illustrates, my participants look at citizenship more as a connectedness to fellow citizens on all levels, and many of their citizenship practices are discursive in nature. It is not surprising, then, that they ascribe an important role to the Internet and their online participation in their experience of citizenship because of the ability of the Internet to facilitate connections, multi-modal expression, and conversations. My study specifically focuses on the concepts of global citizenship and digital citizenship. The next section examines the concept of global citizenship as reflected in scholarly literature and in the citizenship discourse of my participants.

Global Citizenship

Global citizenship is among the several alternative ideas about citizenship that reflects the changes introduced by an increasingly networked society. One of the goals of my study is to examine how the normative nature of "ideal" values and qualities proposed by scholars to define a "global citizen" reflect the cultural and geopolitical variances in the world. My participants

self-identify as global citizens (with the exception of two of them, and I will later explain why they do not call themselves global citizens) and attribute a significant role to the Internet in shaping their global civic identities (of course in intersection with several other factors). In this section, I begin with a summary of scholarly arguments supporting the idea of global citizenship and the qualities/practices they associate with being a global citizen. Later in the chapter I examine why my informants call themselves global citizens, how they experience global citizenship, and how they negotiate the challenges posed by this fuzzy and contentious idea. The review of literature confirms that global citizenship and global civic identities are indeed difficult concepts to pin down. Scholars debate over several questions: Is global citizenship possible? Is it desirable? How does it alter the notion and enactment of citizenship? What are the alternatives for conceptualizing and administering citizenship beyond the nation-state and what governance mechanisms would we need to actually put this concept into practice. There are no easy answers to these questions.

Global citizenship is not a new idea, but the world events like the rapid globalization, the escalating ethnic conflicts, and the rising migration rates of the last several decades have brought the concept back to the attention of researchers, educators, and politicians alike. It has also entered the popular discourse as evident by my participants' familiarity with the term. The notion of the *KosmouPolites* or *cosmo-polities* -- a citizen of the universe -- originated in the Graeco-Roman world, particularly in the philosophies of the Stoics (practicing a life of virtue in accordance with reason) and the Cynics. The Stoics were not rejecting their immediate political communities but valorized allegiance to moral community made up by humanity of all human beings (Dower, 200). Tarrow (2005) also notes that cosmopolitanism has long been associated with trade, exile, and humanitarianism in the past. Cosmopolitical thinking resurfaced in the 18th

century in Kantian philosophy, and in the 19th century by Levinas' work on ethics that valorizes the obligation to respond to the others and Derrida's notion of hospitality. In the 1990s, Martha Nussbaum initiated a discussion on cosmopolitanism with a call to "debating the limits of patriotism" (Nussbaum, 1996) in which several prominent philosophers and educationists participated.

One of the reasons for reemergence of this debate is that, as Dower (2003) notes, increasingly global problems require collective solutions. Threats to democracy, increasing inequalities, competition over depleting resources and global environmental issues have also led to a revival of interest in civil society, citizenship, and civic identity. Some of the most vocal voices in favor of global civil society and global citizenship are Appiah (2006), Archibugi (2008), Benhabib (2007), Dower and Williams (2002), Falk (2002), Held (2002), Keane (2003), and Nussbaum (1996). Of course, they vary in the nuances of the best way to define and practice citizenship that goes beyond the nation-state, but they all see it as a desirable and feasible alternative for our increasingly connected and inter-dependent world.

Dower (2002), Held (2002), and Keane (2003) make a convincing argument that the time has come to respond to transnational action and actors, and for developing appropriate political systems that reflect the needs of a 21st century, globalized world. All of the scholars who wrestle with global citizenship acknowledge the great difficulties in conceptualizing citizenship in a non-state context given that national identities have been strongly nurtured and established across the world.

As Dower points out, however, most of these scholars also accept the idea of a universal community of responsibility (in addition to local communities) suggested as being at the core of global citizenship. There are different cognitive, affective, and practice-based underpinnings of

global citizenship advanced by various scholars (e.g. Dower, 2002; Falk, 2002; Held, 2002; Keane, 2003; Kung, 2002). These scholars have identified the ethos of non-violence, sustainability, compassion, and solidarity as the normative values that define global citizenship. For example, Dower (2002, p.48) summarizes the elements of global citizenship as follows: the pursuit of global causes; democratic engagement in global issues through national political parties, NGOs, networking, and so on; membership of/belonging to a global political order through global civil society; membership of a real global community of humankind; and, the affirmation of the universal moral rights of all human beings and the development of particularistic transnational solidarities for the protection of group rights and identities. Inter-religious and inter-civilizational dialogue is strongly encouraged as a path to global ethics. I particularly endorse Falk's (2002, p.27) succinct view that a global citizen carries "an allegiance to values and not to states."

Ferree (2006) and Tarrow (2005) observe that global interaction today differs from that of the past in one important way in that it was previously the prerogative of the governments and the elites but today it increasingly involves ordinary citizens who willingly or unwillingly are sucked into the social changes that shape and are shaped by globalization and new technologies. It becomes important, therefore, to examine how scholarly arguments about the resurgence of global citizenship actually play out in the lived experiences of ordinary people and what attributes they associate with being a global citizen..

My participants unanimously agree that determining who can be a "global citizen" is a tricky task. Some of the questions they wrestle with are: are we all global citizens by the virtue of our being human or because our lives are willingly or unwillingly impacted by globalization and new media technologies? Is self-identification enough to label one as a global citizen or is

there a set of external criteria that a global citizen should meet? Are there certain values and attitudes that a global citizen must display? Is global citizenship associated with a certain frame of mind? Are formal civic involvement and transnational action necessary criteria for identifying a global citizen?

Most of my participants agree on some of the basic qualities associated with global citizens and these are in close alignment to scholarly literature. Care, love, respect, tolerance, awareness, understanding, and engagement are the words mentioned the most frequently when women speak about the qualities of a global citizen; these are not very different from the way they generally imagine qualities of a good citizen. Nadia, however, argues that people will inevitably define global citizenship differently depending on their own experience; these definitions run the gamut from consuming foods and cultural products from different cultures to using new media technologies and applications to actively taking part in global protests. Some women also bring up the notion of a hierarchy in the way one can be identified as a global citizen with consumption at the bottom and active global civic participation at the top.

Laura, for example, cautions against the myth that one becomes a global citizen by consuming global food and global music. Instead, “you have to be really caring, really loving,” she says. Cristina believes that global citizens are more likely to “take care of our communities and our planet.” She sees the dichotomous way of thinking about “me and the other” as the basis of global unrest. The qualities Cristina emphasizes in a global citizen are understanding, empathy, and acceptance. Helen summarizes her guiding philosophy in a succinct statement: “[L]ook after people and look after the planet.” Being able to have respectful interactions with people from different socio-cultural backgrounds is the key quality that Aya associates with

global citizenship. For Sania, Saumya, Yohana, and Shahla as well, open mindedness to other cultures is an important quality of a global citizen.

Helen (a high school student and animal lover from South Africa), Mayang (a university student and volunteer from Indonesia), and Rola (a Lebanese-Canadian art historian) connect global citizenship with awareness. Helen says, “Global citizen should at least know what is going on in the world, have interest in different topics, should at least read about various things... should try and spread the word and try to help where she can.” In Raji’s (a development sector professional from Nepal) vision, global citizenship means stopping all discrimination, “between rich and poor, black and white, Asian and European/American etc.” For Nadia and Gwenn, engagement is very important to being a global citizen; “[y]ou need to be engaged in order to be a global citizen -- in international development, cooperation, or in North-South and South-South interaction...If you care about what is happening beyond your little town you are a global citizen,” argues Nadia.

My participants claim that they try to integrate some of the above qualities, characteristics, values, and practices associated with global citizenship in their own lives. They justify their self-identification as global citizens with four specific arguments: one, their relationships, civic work, empathy, and solidarity are based on basic human connection, and not on national or ethnic identities; two, their civic actions (that often include professional actions), even when rooted locally, positively touch the lives of people beyond any geographic boundaries; three, they participate in the global public sphere mostly through new media technologies; and four, they are not ethnocentric in their approach and welcome good ideas and practices from different cultures.

Ginger, a U.S.-based physical therapist and yoga teacher, gives several examples of her own online and offline civic work and points out that she is a global citizen because the basis of her reaching out to those in need has been rooted in empathy and not in shared nationality. In addition to signing petitions on global and transnational issues, Ginger used her musical talent to raise funds for Haiti. Since 2010, she has organized about five concerts and raised about \$20,000 for humanitarian work in Haiti. Using her expertise in yoga as therapy, Ginger taught yoga to 40 Afghan girls who were on her island. When she learned about vitamin and mineral deficiency and malnutrition in Afghan girls in refugee camps, Ginger petitioned one of the largest manufacturers of vitamins in the U.S. and obtained a donation of vitamins worth \$22,000. She also helped a young Afghan student to get a scholarship and study in the U.S.-- and attended her graduation. Ginger says, "You can care for the children of the planet even if you don't see them." So, even when Ginger is working from her island home in North Carolina, her reaching out to people from other countries and cultures contributes to her strong global civic identity.

Gwenn is from Zimbabwe but will soon be relocating to Ethiopia to work for African Union Youth Volunteer Program. Through this program, Gwenn will be working not only in Zimbabwe but also in all of the African Union's 56 countries. Gwenn, as well as Katerina who works for combatting human trafficking, call themselves global citizens because their work has repercussions and touches people's lives in several countries and societies other than their own. Katerina also thinks that self-announcement as a global citizen is not enough: "One should demonstrate to him/herself and to the others his/her 'globalness' by her actions and thoughts, and her responsibility for global events." Raji has never had a chance to travel outside Nepal except a brief trip to Delhi, India. She feels she is a global citizen because of her contribution to global online communities like ABC4All and girlshelpgirls.org, which has members from all over the

world. In all of the above examples, we see the idea of “reaching out beyond the national borders” as an important criterion for global citizenship.

Is working beyond the geographic boundaries of one’s own country then a necessary parameter to define global citizens? As some of my participants argue, not so. Local engagement can also make one a global citizen under certain conditions. Graciela calls herself a global citizen and explains, “I think that in the end even when I am in the periphery of women suffering from violence [in Rio], I’m working on the universal issues. What I bring up there, what we are able to achieve together, what I learn from them is helping women everywhere.” Similarly, Yohana calls herself a global citizen because even when she writes from her home in Brazil the issues she writes about are global and the online platform -- Global Voices Online -- that she shares her writing on has a global audience. “I think it is possible for anyone to be a global citizenship. It is really being committed to what you do in your everyday life. Of course it comes to the global from the local but it is possible...” says Yohana.

In fact, Tripp (2006) suggests that for women from the most powerful countries, influencing governments (including their own governments) and institutions to act justly on global issues is a powerful way of being a global citizen without actually traveling or working outside those countries. These governments and institutions affect the lives of people all over the world. This argument implies that it is primarily the scope of the impact of one’s work, immediate or gradual, and the lives of people that one’s work changes that determine one’s success as a global citizen.

Another way of being a global citizen without physically or professionally crossing national boundaries is through adopting practices from many cultures instead of adopting an ethnocentric outlook. The Internet is one of the main tools that my participants utilize for

exposure to other cultures, along with other media like books and films; there is also always travel, when feasible and that is not often. Opportunities for international travel are few for most of these women, except a few, like Andrea, Florence (a non-profit leader and founder of Y-Fem, a feminist organization for young women in Namibia), Graciela, and Rola. Graciela emphasizes the ease of getting exposed to multiple perspectives on the Internet. According to Graciela, an important aspect of global citizenship is “the ability to look at the world not through your eyes, but to understand, make an effort to reach the perspectives of other people who are in different situation than yours.” The Internet, according to her, can provide many opportunities for such encounters.

Nadia has shaped her personality and identity through conscious multicultural choices. She argues, “I guess I am a world citizen because I have taken many things from India -- reading Gandhi, non-violence, spirituality in general -- so that has been my inspiration. And about my way of life, it is the Americans, the way they are positive, the way they always say that well, when one door closes another door opens... So, I pick whatever I like from different countries and make my identity.” Nadia claims that she is “not just French or Moroccan. I am Indian for my spirituality, I am American for my spirit, I guess everybody is like that, no?,” asks Nadia. Well, the current world events triggered by ethnocentrism and the dominant nation-state focused practices of citizenship show that not everybody is like that.

This section examined the various ways my participants justify their self-identification as global citizens. They argue that they qualify as global citizens by showing empathy and solidarity to fellow human irrespective of their national and ethnic identities, influencing lives outside their national boundaries, participating in the global public sphere mainly through the Internet, and by welcoming ideas from other cultures into their lives. National citizenship,

however, is an entrenched and resilient concept and challenging it is not an easy task, conceptually or in practice. The following section examines the various approaches and strategies my participants have adopted to reach their self-identification as global citizens.

Approaches to Self-identification as a Global Citizen

Though all my participants (except two) self-identify as global citizens, they do not all reach this identification in the same way. I observed three different approaches that my participants used in defining their civic identities:

1. Challenging nationalism and accepting national citizenship only as an administrative option.
2. Accepting national citizenship but taking citizenship practices beyond national.
3. Problematizing the concept of citizenship itself.

1. Challenging nationalism. Critical thinking about citizenship has led several women in my study to question the concept and practices of national citizenship. Women in my study who take this approach to define their civic identities are either of binational/bicultural/multicultural backgrounds and/or have taken college courses in the social sciences and humanities that have exposed them to the critique of national identities. These women come closest to embodying the original concept of cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2010; Benhabib, 2007; Nussbaum, 1996) and one of the appeals of the virtual environment, for them, is the freedom from national boundaries.

Cristina, Gulab, Rola, Laura, Aya, Sania, Yohana, and Nadia identify themselves unambiguously as world citizens and reject the notion of national citizenship as arbitrary and artificial. For them, local and global affinities feel more natural than artificially conferred national citizenship. Cristina strongly critiques the Romanian preoccupation with nationalism under the guise of patriotism. Aya differentiates between nationalism and patriotism and finds ethnocentrism a dangerous trait for world peace; she explains, “Having pride in your own

country is fine, but still respecting everyone else is being a global citizen. Being proud of your culture or heritage it is not a necessary condition that you should have hatred for others.”

Pointing to the artificially cultivated sense of ethnocentrism and the possibility for subverting it, she argues that “[e]thnocentrism is entrenched but it is entrenched for a reason...there was a process that created this entrenchment thinking that you are higher or you are better or whatever than others...so there must be a process to get out of there.”

Nadia says that she has fought staunch nationalists all of her life, and that she believes that “[b]eing in box reassures people.” Nadia is a journalist who lives in Morocco now, but she was educated in France. Her mother is French and father Moroccan. Nadia is an interesting case in demonstrating how multicultural upbringing and the experience of being a “foreigner” in whichever country she is in, combined with liberal education and a resulting emphasis on critical thinking, lead to a radically different perception of citizenship than those who have had no experience of other cultures. In the long conversations we have, Nadia raises several important points about identities, choice, and our basic human connection. Nadia says,

The way I see my duty, my idea of citizenship -- everything is influenced by the fact that I am binational...I think everybody can be [simultaneously] a citizen of different countries. Of course, you grew up in certain places, that shapes you, that’s the way you see the world of course, but you can also choose, you can do whatever you want and create your happiness...Also there is no one way of being an Indian or Moroccan. There are as many ways as there are people.

In saying this, Nadia challenges the imposed homogeneous national identities that are forced on people in exchange for giving them a label of citizenship. She further argues,

Your passport is the only thing that legally defines you, the rest you can choose. We should be free to decide our identities but of course you are what you are because people recognizes you as that... The biggest problem with citizenship is identity. They think you have to be this and this and this and act this way and be this way...it should really be like you want to be in this country, pay taxes, respect the law, make it your home then fine.

Nadia's critique contains some important issues that problematize national citizenship: one, being a citizen of more than one country is still not a widely acceptable notion; two, it is required to carry arbitrarily imposed visible markers to show a certain identity so that those who matter recognize you and accept you as a fellow national citizen; and three, national citizenship cannot be freely chosen but is rather assigned -- but only if one meets the imposed identity requirements and does not just fulfill the legal duties of paying taxes and respecting the laws.

Nadia, and several other participants, see themselves as world citizens based on a common human connection. Nadia, in fact, goes a step further to argue against being loyal to one's own country: She says, "I would never like to work for my country's diplomacy. It stops you from connecting with other human beings. We are all human beings...we can connect with anyone, anywhere...we all have emotions, we all have things we are afraid of. Being loyal to your country and working for your country separates you from the rest of the human kind. I would fight that (...)."

In Nadia's assertion, we can see that invoking basic humanness as the foundation of relationships frees one to make connections beyond the national boundaries and facilitates one's self-identification as a global citizen. On the other hand, however, there is a real risk involved in this thinking. It can produce universalism wherein people ignore the real and material differences in individuals and their lifeworlds. Very often, under such circumstances, it is the dominant

culture and locations of power that get valorized as the “normal” or “universal.” Most of my participants are critical thinkers and question local and global power equations, and thereby raise my hopes that their invocation of “our common humanity” would still allow for recognizing real differences.

Like Nadia above, Rola, Aya, and Sania are also products of multicultural upbringing and binational identities, college educations, and strong tendencies towards critical thinking. Sania, for example, challenges national citizenship as sharply as Nadia does, but represents a different location. As a second-generation immigrant Muslim woman of color, Sania has both experienced and observed discrimination in the United States. She reads voraciously and thinks critically about what she reads, observes, and experiences. As a result, Sania has been struggling over the definition of citizenship. She explains, “My definition...I am struggling with that right now. With my research and reading... for the past year, I am not sure the nation-state is a good thing. I don't know citizenship as it is defined in America [is a good thing]...why such hierarchy?...we should be equal. I would say who cares if money is spent on other citizens.” Sania too emphasizes, “being human” as the sole basis for recognizing a fellow citizen as she says, “To me, to have your self validated as a person in this world, you only have to be breathing... I feel like when we put people into categories it takes away their status of human being.”

Interestingly, these women are not radical anarchists. Even when they challenge national citizenship they accept the dictates of national citizenship as an administrative necessity -- they vote, pay taxes, follow rules, and participate in nationally focused civic work -- but their emotional investment is global. They also deviate significantly from what Harris (2004) claims to be the uncritical and blended ‘model multicultural citizenship’ the young immigrant women are expected to display in predominantly white, Western countries like the U.S. and Australia.

2. Going beyond the national. The second sub-group of women in my study accept and invest in their national citizenship, but aspire to move beyond just being national citizens. Laura, for example, reflects this thinking when she claims, “I am happy to be Venezuelan but not only that.” Valerie does not deny her American citizenship either. She admits that her work as a public policy analyst, advocacy coordinator, and blogger on gender and mothers’ rights has a larger following and more influence in the U.S., but she still feels she is “a citizen of human family, a global citizen.” While Florence is proud to be a global citizen, she has a deep knowledge of problems in her country and she also feels a pride in her small country’s achievements in peaceful governance, human rights record, and taking national issues seriously.

This approach resonates with what Parekh (2003) calls a “globally oriented citizenship.” According to Parekh, “[a] globally oriented citizen has a valued home from which he reaches out to and form different kind of alliances with others having homes of their own” (p.12). There is, however, an implicit acceptance of national citizenship in Parekh’s argument of “having a valued home.” Interestingly, the first group of women who challenge national citizenship also value their own homes and have local bases, but they still recognize that there is something arbitrary in some people having a claim on a “home” and some not. These women recognize that many unfortunate people in the world have lost their homes and yet are still worthy of our attention.

The youngest group of women in my study -- Mayang, Febi, and Helen -- has a more national and conventional orientation in defining citizenship. This is how Febi, a fresh college graduate, co-founder of the SunFlower Post- a global blogging community for young women- and a passionate belly dancer from Indonesia defines a good citizen:

Citizenship is that you are part of your country, you are an asset for your country, you have responsibilities, vote, pay taxes to contribute to your country, you belong to your

country and you have responsibilities. Good citizens fulfill [their] obligation[s], are not destructive... make your identity visible to country so that your government can track who you are (in Indonesia each person has an identity card from a city that is important for making a bank account, for registering to institutions, school...), keep cities clean, participate in political activities, choosing president, governor or mayor (voting).

The younger women also speak about practical limitations that hold them back from fully exercising their role as global citizens. Helen focuses on her national citizenship in South Africa when explaining her perception of citizenship but clearly signals that she is an “aspiring global citizen.” She says, “For now I am more focused on my own country...but something like climate change, it affects people everywhere, the whole world is affected by it so you have to be global when it comes to climate change.” Helen makes it clear that she is waiting to grow up and be more independent in order to be able to work at a global level; the only reason why she is not as active as she would like to be is because of limitations like financial dependence and school. “I will do more one day,” says Helen resolutely. Raji from Nepal shares similar aspirations. Though she accepts her Nepalese citizenship, she expresses disappointment that even when she herself feels like a global citizen and chats with many international friends, she hasn’t had many opportunities to actively play the role of a transnational citizen. She wonders if her location in a developing country has something to do with it. Febi also expresses reservations about her lack of global mobility. This group of women, partly willingly and partly because of limitations, see themselves primarily acting as citizens of their countries, but they also aspire and attempt to broaden their scope to transnational civic engagement.

3. Problematizing the concepts of citizenship/global citizenship. Even when most women in my study identify themselves as global citizens, the concept of global citizenship is

not unquestioningly and unproblematically acceptable to everyone in the study. The two exceptions are Febi and Gulab, both of whom reject the label of “global citizen.” Febi associates citizenship with responsibilities and rights and points out that she has no rights in the global arena. Besides, she says, “I am not that familiar with the term global citizenship, sounds very political to me...I have access to communicate with people wherever they are...accessible through online media...I am more comfortable calling myself a resident of a global village rather than a global citizen.”

Gulab has different reasons to reject the label of global citizen. Gulab (a second generation American of Indian origin, though she rejects even this label) questions the entire concept of citizenship itself. She does so through drawing from her personal life experiences, her experience of organizing with immigrant groups, her vast range of reading, and a highly critical disposition. Gulab says, “... I actually question the whole concept of citizenship ...because citizenship translates into some kind of relationship with the government and you know I have a lot of friends who don’t have paperwork, who never had paperwork because their birth was never recorded on paper...they would never be able to gain citizenship because they have never had citizenship (...).” Gulab further explains, “I don’t identify with global citizenship at all because it reminds me of nation-state which I don’t believe in.” Gulab points to her vitriolic Tumblr posts as evidence of her beliefs and claims that she is against nationalism, against the whole concept of America, and rejects globalization. Gulab expresses the most rebellious views among all of my participants, but she does find her online engagement through Tumblr and Twitter personally fulfilling, as it provokes other people to think critically. Gulab has a

substantial following on social media among young *desi*¹ men and women with whom she engages in critical conversations.

Concerns with the Concept of Global Citizenship

My participants claim that they are global citizens, but in reality, there are many complicating/problematising issues surrounding this concept. In this section, I examine some of the contentious issues associated with global citizenship that scholars, as well as my participants, have brought up. There are several critical voices that argue about not just the impossibility but undesirability of such an endeavor as global citizenship. For example, Chandhoke (2002) argues that at its core globalization is driven by “capital’s restless and endless pursuits... across the national borders” (p.42) and the global civil society has limits because ultimately, global civil society actors work within inherited structures of power that they may modify or alter but seldom transform” (p.52). Mouffe (2005) and Resnick (1998) claim that primordial ties and the passions they arouse are significant factors in driving political participation, and McIntyre has argued that global citizens are rootless. Chandler (2004) challenges the claims of inclusiveness of the bottom up global movements and argues, “rather than expanding the sphere of inclusiveness, global civic activism tends to undermine community connections. This is because the political ethics it advocates are deeply corrosive of social engagement and prone to elitist rather than inclusive consequences” (p.313). Finally, Keohane (2003), Scholte (2004), and Zum (2004) among others have drawn our attention to the concerns about the challenges involved in global governance.

¹ *Desi* means native in some Indian languages like Hindi and Gujarati. The term was initially used in a pejorative sense but now it also denotes political identity among immigrants from South Asia.

Conflict of loyalty, the unwavering strength of primordial ties, the fear of Western hegemony, a lack of institutions and infrastructure of governance at the global level, and a concern about rootless citizens are some of the main challenges that cannot be ignored in any articulation of global citizenship.

Conflict of loyalty between national and global; strong primordial ties. Mouffe (2005) sees the questions of belonging, roots and split-loyalties as major challenges to global citizenship. Traditionally, loyalty is an attribute closely associated with citizenship because, as in the case of national citizenships, a citizen is supposed to receive protection and privileges in exchange for being loyal to one's country. Williams (2002, p.65) observes that "a bargain of sorts" exists between the sovereign state and its citizens. Williams (2002, p.67) also refers to Miller in order to argue the importance of the "identity element" in citizenship. Goals of democracy and social justice require sacrifice and redistribution of wealth that are unlikely to take place without a sense of loyalty, unity, and belonging to a community. Miller sees no sign of such a community existing at the level of the European Union. Can we then expect this kind of community to emerge at a global level? I examine the issue of bonding and a sense of community online in Chapter Five and conclude that while most online ties are weak ties, some strong bonds do develop through online civic participation. The challenge of overcoming the pull of primordial ties is real though as the following example from my study shows.

Saumya, an Indian-American undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin is spending a year in Argentina as a study-abroad student. Saumya calls herself a global citizen especially because of her multi-cultural upbringing and experience of living in different countries, but her observations of people's tendency to form ethnocentric clusters have caused her to lose faith in the possibility of global citizenship becoming a norm. She agrees with

Mouffe's observation about the lasting powers of primordial ties and the passions these ties can arouse. Saumya observes how even in highly multicultural environments, like American university campuses or in study abroad programs, people tend to be friends only with people like themselves and form cliques. According to Saumya, even when people have the opportunity to do so, they rarely cross racial, ethnic, or language boundaries. Doing so requires a great deal of effort to which people are not often willing to dedicate themselves.

The fear of Western hegemony. In the 21st century world of multi-cultural societies and increasingly violent ethnic conflicts over cultural relativism, who should define global ethics and how remains a crucial question in the larger picture of global citizenship. Chandhoke (2002), Keane (2003), and Mouffe (2005) have shown through many examples from world history that, in the name of global citizenship, the world will become monocentric; they have also sharply critiqued the American government's tendency to disregard global wisdom and opinions in its propensity towards war mongering. Several of my participants, while arguing that globalization and new media technologies are bringing more people together, also recognize the negative homogenizing effect this might have on the world.

Mouffe (2005,) quotes Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who asserts that as long as they are conceived as "universal," human rights will always be the instrument of what he calls "[g]lobalization from above, something imposed by the West on the rest of the world" (p.125). Aya speaks about the way global citizenship is used as an excuse to impose practices from outside, especially in the way that the global North behaves towards countries in the Middle East. She explains, "Till everybody consider themselves global citizens, I don't think any of us have the right to say [to others] what you are doing is not respectful or this is not good for women or whatever. I think those kind of social changes need to come from within the society."

Aya gives examples from Saudi Arabia to prove her point: “In Saudi Arabia, for example, women are not allowed to drive...So may be I don't think that there should be specific gender roles but if that deeply conservative society does, I am not going to go there and tell them that you've got it wrong. That has to come from them. There has to be social change within their structure.” Aya shows how this kind of social change from within has been gradually occurring in Lebanon: “Lebanon is a patriarchal society and the women's movement...they just opened a men's center. They want to inform men that the patriarchal structure is not just creating hardships for women but it is also hard for men...so they are doing it on their own, without interference from the West because they think they need this change and people are responding to it (...).”

Aya's argument generates many questions associated with the practice of global citizenship and highlights dilemmas that sensitive global citizens like my participants often face. These dilemmas become more acute in the case of citizens from locations of power. Tripp (2006) discusses some of these questions in detail with respect to international feminist activism. Tripp (2006) observes, "When international support is extended it is not always offered in ways that reflect an understanding of other women's movements, their local contexts, and their needs" (p.296). Tripp identifies four factors that affect why all transnational interventions are not successful and often meet with hostility from domestic actors: one, hubris in transnational assistance that results in outsiders believing "they are providing an unquestionable 'good' in taking action on behalf of another group of people" (such outside action fails to notice the damage it can cause); two, the oversimplification and disregard of context; three, the rescue paradigm, wherein outsiders consider local actors backward victims; and four, the homogenizing and essentializing of partners, for example, identifying 'all Africans' or 'all Asians.' The above

discussion brings forth the tension between the ideal of global citizenship and the way its impact is being experienced by women in different locations.

Aya's guiding principles for transnational intervention are in alignment with Tripp's observations but when local cultural sovereignty is given supreme importance there emerges a risk of extreme moral relativism. Should we valorize local cultural practices that violate basic human dignity and life? That again brings us to the recurring debates over universal versus culture-specific human rights. Therefore, for those like my participants, who claim to be global citizens and engage in transnational advocacy, the dilemma of when and how much to intervene would remain a complicated area that defies easy solutions.

Absence of global governance and institutions. One of the biggest reservations that political scientists have about the idea of global citizenship is the impossibility and also undesirability of global institutions of governance. Many previous experiments like the League of Nations and the UN have failed in securing global harmony or even freedom from violent wars (Imber 2002) and there have been no relevant institutions to implement this idea at the global level (Chandler, 2003; Dower, 2002). Fraser & Nash (2013) argue that in the original Habermasian concept of the public sphere, the deliberation is addressed to a sovereign entity, those in the decision-making positions. In the absence of such an authority at the global level the transnational public sphere is a problematic notion. Again, if the attempt to have global governing bodies ever succeeds in the future, the concern over the US dominance is very real for some of these scholars like Keane (2003) and Mouffe (2005).

Global citizens as rootless nomads. In the scholarly debate over global citizenship, critics often describe global citizens as "rootless" people or nomads with no attachments (McIntyre, 1982; Murdoch, 1970). As Williams (2002) notes, "only the state can generate the

sense of identity and belonging that is necessary; Ideally nation-state: A shared history, culture, language and religion and linked to specific territory” (p.65). Barber (1996) in response to Nussbaum’s (1996) appeal for limiting patriotism, argues, “what we require are healthy, democratic forms of local community and civic patriotism rather than abstract universalism and the thin gruel of contract relations” (p.31).

Women in my study, however, clearly demonstrate that a strong global civic identity does not weaken one’s local connections or negatively affect civic participation at local or national levels. Andrea’s personal and professional daily life, for example, is full of all three of these elements. Talking about her local, national, and global citizenships, Ginger says, “ I can’t put one over the other, they are all equally important to me;” Katerina expresses similar thoughts.

Graciela points out the need to link global citizenship with local citizenship. She explains, “Of course, the citizenship starts with local, with your neighborhood, with your everyday actions but it is perfectly possible to make this reach and have impact globally. People build stories that are seen somewhere else and they have impact on lives of people somewhere else. I do believe in the power of stories (...).” Graciela believes that global change very often emerges from changes in local cultures and Katerina argues that every individual contributes to what happens in the world. “I am one of them,” she says. Graciela and Katerina both recognize that the Internet can be a very effective tool for global circulation of local stories. Shahla self-identifies as a global citizen and participates in several global websites, but as a peace activist, she believes in “thinking globally and acting locally.” For her, taking care of her immediate community and participating in national-level activist programs are equally important.

Valerie describes in detail how her work as a mother, advocacy coordinator, public policy analyst, and blogger is constantly crossing local, national, and global boundaries as she

participates in society as a mother, a professional, a communicator, and a citizen; she says, "...I am raising two children and I am reaching them with what I learn and what I do. So I influence my family, my neighborhood and my community and then public policy. I influence households, families around the country, and may be some people in different places around the world." Valerie has a realistic understanding of her situation. She is aware that her biggest influence is on her children and that most of her work has an impact on local and national audiences and public policy -- but her affinity lies with women globally. As she explains: "When I say I am a global citizen it is also my moral obligation to the family of humankind and my particular connection with women around the world." In addition to this, the issues Valerie writes about are globally relevant issues of women, work, childcare and health. Valerie claims that her writing, social talk, and family interactions all simultaneously become part of her local and global citizenships.

Our discussion clearly shows that self-identification, as a global citizen does not alienate these women from their local contexts. Gwenn has traveled in almost every province of her country due to the nature of her work on reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS, as have Shahla in Pakistan and Andrea in Mexico. All of my participants have intimate knowledge of their local contexts, especially about the situation of women in their own societies, have local attachments and affinities, play civic roles in local organizations, and often use their global connections to further their local engagement.

Florence, an emerging Feminist leader, for example, has deep insights into how feminism is misunderstood in Namibia and these insights have shaped her civic work, "Many women feel that feminism is a Western term and they feel intimidated by the language of feminism...so much needs to be done at grassroots level for us to translate the language of feminism in our indigenous languages", says Florence. Florence is also well aware of the generation gap that

exists in the Namibian feminist movement. These local needs are at the foundation of her civic organization Y-FEM, which benefits from Florence's global connections. Florence uses her online global connections to remain informed and forge collaborations that help her feminist mission in Namibia. Women like Florence who are in leadership positions, for example Gwenn from Zimbabwe and Olfa from Tunisia (currently working as a youth organizer with UNFPA in Djibouti) also have a very good sense of technological access and infrastructure in their countries and local communities. They know the tariffs, limitations like power shortages and lack of Wi-Fi, rates of mailing different packages, and the kind of media people tend to use for different purposes; this type of knowledge allows them to have their strategies worked around the particularities of location.

Cristina has extensive knowledge about women in the military in Romania, gender discrimination, the history of political struggles, and the resulting social consequences. She speaks about the "double shift" that women are expected to carry in Romania and alcoholism in men as a typical "Romanian" problems resulting from the loss of industries after the fall of communism. Even when Cristina calls herself a global citizen and connects to global feminist movements in various ways, her civic work on domestic violence is predominantly carried out in a local context through a feminist non-profit in Romania. For bicultural women like Sania, Gulab, and Aya, their close encounters with racism in their own American communities and their knowledge of the conflicted lives of immigrant youth have provided the context for their transnational civic work on intercultural understanding.

As we can see from the examples above, women's online and offline civic work is rooted in their personal lived experiences and local contexts, although it gets nurtured and supported by their global connections. In most cases, being a global citizen does not take away but rather

strengthens their local/national citizenships. In this sense, they are what Tarrow (2005) calls rooted cosmopolitans. Held (2002) suggests the idea of multiple citizenships -- political memberships in the diverse political communities that significantly affect people. They would be "citizens of their immediate political communities and of the wider regional and global networks which impacted upon their lives" (p.100). The way my participants negotiate local, national, and global citizenships reflect Held's notion of multiple citizenships.

Despite these challenges to articulation and practice of global citizenship discussed earlier in the chapter, my participants emphatically endorse the relevance of global citizenship and self-identify as global citizens. How do they negotiate the challenges in their lived experience of citizenship? I argue that articulating their citizenship practices as "transcultural" helps to resolve some of the issues that are raised in regards to global citizenship.

Transcultural Citizenship

Although my participants self-identify as the more commonly known term "global citizen," I would argue that the global civic subculture that my study has identified can be better explained as "transcultural citizenship." Naming it a "subculture" requires some explanation. The Oxford English Dictionary defines subculture as "a cultural group within a large culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture." In academic terms Haenfler (2014) has proposed a working definition of subculture as "a relatively *diffuse* social network having a *shared identity*, *distinctive meanings* around certain ideas, practices, and objects, and a sense of *marginalization* from or *resistance* to a perceived "conventional society" Italics original (p.16). The women in my study articulate and practice citizenship differently than the currently dominant nation-centered approach. They make connections with diverse others, and come together around issues and interests more than national, ethnic, or religious identities.

It was surprising to note the similarities in their values and in the phrases they invoked when speaking about citizenship, even when inhabiting vastly different lifeworlds. I do not see transcultural citizenship as existing in opposition to global citizenship, but as a different path to global civic participation, one that proceeds from the bottom up. It operates alongside national citizenship rather than replacing it.

Transculturation is a term introduced by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1947 to describe the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures. Transculturation challenges the earlier concepts of acculturation, which denoted the acquisition of another culture, and deculturation, the losing of a culture. Instead, it draws our attention to the processes of how cultures interact and converge to produce new cultures. The process of transculturation is put into motion by larger and powerful macrosocial forces, but ultimately transculturation is experienced and resolved at the micro-interpersonal level. Ortiz's conceptualization, located in the Cuban context, is very applicable to globalization and new media technologies, and also reflects my participants' individual lived experiences under these two larger forces. Ortiz also acknowledges the natural tendency of people to resolve conflicts over time. Slimbach developed this concept further as transculturalism with respect to global studies curriculum. According to Slimbach (2005), author of *The Transcultural Journey*, transculturalism is rooted in the pursuit of shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders, and we see this reflected in the way my participants define citizenship.

There are several reasons why transcultural citizenship is a more appropriate term than global citizenship for the civic subculture we see emerging through my participants' practices. The first is that global citizenship, as advanced by Held and others, is an abstract concept and there are often elements of governance and institutional involvement. Transcultural citizenship,

on the other hand, is experienced more culturally than through legal-political governance.

Howard (2011) shows how such a community -- in his case, an online, Christian fundamentalist one -- emerges in non-institutional ways in individual acts of communication through the sharing ideas rather than physical proximity.

Howard uses the term “vernacular” to refer to “non-institutional beliefs and practices that exist alongside but apart from institutions.” Howard cites ethnographer Lenonard Primiano (1995), who applied the term to the study of religion and described “vernacular religion” as the manifestation of religious beliefs and practices in the everyday lives of individual believers (p.7). In this sense, transcultural citizenship is very much “vernacular citizenship” or “vernacular subculture.” Shirky, a prominent writer on technology and society, recognizes the power of the Internet in making possible such “organizing without organizations” (2008). Thus, communication is central to sustaining transcultural citizenship and the practices associated with it are not constrained by a lack of governance or global institutions.

There is another important observation that I have made: my participants separate the three dimensions of citizenship. Administratively, they accept national citizenship (sometimes out of national pride, sometimes out of having no better option). For example, they vote in national elections, pay taxes, and behave in a civically responsible manner. Affectively, however, their emotional investment is global -- that is, based on a connection with fellow humans. In citizenship practices they are transnational, with strong roots in local communities but also by acting civically in other countries.

When one claims to be a global citizen but is still a citizen of a particular nation-state for all practical purposes, and is also bound by primordial ties, there are likely to be many occasions when one’s loyalty is put to test. How do my participants resolve this issue? One strategy shared

by several of my participants is what Falk (2002, p.27) states as “allegiance to values and not to states.” Nadia has obviously given this challenge much thought. She says, “I will be loyal to anything that is right and not anything that is French or Moroccan or whatever. I don’t define myself by the country of belonging.” Nadia and Yohana, as well as Shahla, argue that they work for ideas and ideals and not for a country; that is, their affinities lie with people everywhere, not just with their countries. Yohana’s statement aptly shows that these women don’t act through blind nationalism. She says, “I am proud of being Brazilian but I am not better because I am Brazilian. I write against Brazil when necessary.”

These women, however, are not anarchists. Most of them are not even asking for one global government (scholars and participants both fear American hegemony in the case of one global governing institution). They accept their national identities as one of their many identity axes. But their affective investment is not based solely on national identity. This de-linking of the affective and administrative aspects of citizenship facilitates their experience of transcultural citizenship despite several administrative, legal, and power issues associated with its practice.

Two, transcultural citizenship is embedded in the local cultural experience of actors, (lifeworlds, if you will) and emerges *from* this embeddedness. Earlier in the chapter we discussed how my participants (and thus their civic engagement) are locally rooted. Transcultural citizenship, however, perceives the “local” in a different manner when compared to Tarrow’s (2005) rooted cosmopolitanism, Parekh’s (2003) globally oriented citizenship, or Nussbaum’s (2008) globally sensitive patriotism. Transcultural citizenship valorizes the local over the national and does not treat the local as a static place. Under the influences of globalization and new media technologies, most local cultures are not static -- instead, they are in constant interaction with other cultures. If we consider the complex flow of people, images, information,

and goods in the world today, then we can argue that every local culture incorporates “transculturality” (Welsch 1999 as quoted by Couldry 2003, p.42).

Three, this subculture is relational in that it is built or performed in relation to defined others through the process of communication across cultures. There is a strong interpersonal element here. It is important to reiterate here that my participants value their relationships with fellow citizens more or equal to their relationship with governments or the state.

Internet and Transcultural Citizenship

The Internet plays an important role in the experience of transcultural citizenship because it facilitates the delinking of the national administrative dimension of citizenship from the global affective dimension and also provides opportunities for transnational engagement. In writing about the “virtual ekklesia” (assembly), Howard (2011) argues that a virtual community exists only in so far as the community exist in the minds of its members (this reflects Anderson’s concept of imagined communities): “This community is based on its effects of creating an imagined link between physically separated individuals. Repeated episodes of online communication among these individuals become the only means by which the virtual ekklesia [or assembly] come to being” (p.13). So horizontal communication is centrally important when there is no one governing authority, and the existence of the Internet facilitates it in a way that has not previously been possible.

It is also justifiable that my participants see the Internet as the most important tool for experiencing global citizenship. Tarrow (2005), while describing the emergence of “rooted cosmopolitans” in present times, argues that “[i]t is through people’s relations to significant others that cosmopolitan attitudes are shaped. What is new in our era is the increased number of people and groups whose relations place them beyond their local or national settings without

detaching them from locality” (p.41-42). The Internet has become an important medium through which these relations are established because of the unique affordances of web 2.0 that I examine in detail in the next chapter. These affordances are: one, collaborative knowledge construction/user generated content; two, the ease of multi-modal expression, publication and distribution; three, transborder networks; four, real time as well as asynchronous communication; five, many-to-many communication; six, archiving; and seven, hyperlinks. Although the sixth and seventh affordances were also available on web 1.0, they merit attention given that they are useful for civic engagement.

Through the affordances of web 2.0 mentioned above my participants connect with diverse others globally, engage in conversations, form coalitions, and sometimes engage in collective action while still remaining rooted in their local cultures and lifeworlds. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven examine in detail how these affordances facilitate the transcultural citizenship experience and the different ways that my participants participate in this subculture.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the changing terrain of citizenship using both scholarly literature on the topic and my own empirical data based on the in-depth interviews of 23 women from 15 different countries. Using a cultural studies approach to citizenship, I probed into how these women conceptualize citizenship and perceive their own civic identities. My data suggest the emergence of a global civic subculture that I call “transcultural citizenship,” whose members self-identify as global citizens in culturally-rooted ways, broaden the language of citizenship to include relational, affective, and discursive ways of experiencing it, and attribute to the Internet a significant role in their citizenship experience.

My analysis shows that women like my participants are looking for ways to experience citizenship that goes beyond the conventional legal-judicial conceptualization of citizenship centered on the nation-state model. They reconfigure the notion of citizenship to reflect their lived experiences, which are influenced by globalization and the new media technologies among several other changes in late modern societies. Because these women define citizenship in relational, discursive, and affective terms, communication becomes a crucial component of the citizenship experience that does not exclude embodied action and material change. Besides, my participants de-link the administrative aspect of citizenship from the affective aspect of citizenship, and that facilitates their self-identification as global citizens despite several administrative, legal, and power issues associated with global citizenship.

Subcultures are very often perceived as negative because they are subversive to the norm (Hebdige, 1999). I admit that for the staunch supporters of nationalism and the irreplaceable role of the nation-state, transcultural citizenship would have negative connotations. I, however, recognize that transcultural citizenship may be a subversive but certainly not a disruptive or negative subculture. Blaug (2002, p.107) differentiates between “incumbent democracy that is motivated to preserve and improve existing institutions by maximizing and managing orderly participation” and “critical democracy that seeks instead, to resist such management and empower excluded voices in such a way as to directly challenge existing institutions.” I consider transcultural citizenship as part of a critical practice that would strengthen and not weaken democratic practices worldwide, not only because it can act as a watchdog for hegemonic but undemocratic institutional practices, but also because the foundational values of this subculture are care, love, support, and understanding. Membership in such a subculture has the potential to strengthen civic self-image and feelings of agency. When the dichotomous thinking of “us” and

“them” is at the root of a multitude of global problems, women like my participants, in whatever small ways, can contribute to peace and understanding globally.

The next chapter examines what kinds of spaces the Internet offers for experiencing transcultural citizenship and why the global/transnational civic websites as well as social media like Facebook and Twitter use the affordances of the Internet to facilitate civic information, expression, and connection, and collaboration.

CHAPTER 4: THE GLOBAL CIVIC WEB-SPHERE

Chapter Three, “Reconfiguring Citizenship,” argues that there is a need to broaden the language of citizenship in order to reflect the new reality as shaped by globalization and new media technologies. In Chapter Three, I showed how, as transcultural citizens, the women in my study take a non-conventional path to experiencing citizenship. They define and experience citizenship in relational, affective, and discursive ways. They also delink the administrative, affective, and practice-based dimensions of citizenship; while they accept their national citizenship administratively, they go beyond the national at both the affective and practice levels. All of my participants also claimed that the Internet is playing a valuable role in their experience of transcultural citizenship because it facilitates this delinking. According to my participants, the affordances of the Internet, and specifically the web 2.0,¹ allow them to make transcultural and transnational connections, collaborate with those ideologically similar but geographically distant, and experience civic agency as global citizens. The civic websites they participate in are important spaces for them in terms of experiencing transcultural citizenship.

Some of the questions that this chapter explores are: what kind of spaces and communities are available online for women like my participants to experience transcultural citizenship? What are the core values invoked in these spaces and what kind of civic identities and practices do they encourage? Do these spaces use the affordances of the web 2.0 and if so, how do these affordances influence the experience of transcultural citizenship?

Before I go into a detailed exploration of these questions, I give here a brief overview of the literature, in particular examining the Internet as a tool for civic participation and the potential of online spaces, especially civic websites, to function as spaces for enacting

¹ The web 2.0 is the new version of the web that came after web 1.0; it is the version that became popular in this millenium. The web 2.0 facilitates an interactive and collaborative use of web pages in place of the earlier static web pages that mostly functioned as information sources.

citizenship. This review sets the context for my analysis of the websites.

The Internet and Civic Participation

In this section, I briefly touch upon the patterns of research I found in the area of Internet and civic participation, and the claims made by several researchers that are relevant to my analysis in this chapter. The review shows that new media technologies, especially the Internet, have been closely linked to the changing practices of citizenship. Among the many prominent scholars who have consistently worked in this area are Dahlgren (2005, 2007, 2011) in Sweden; Kotilainen (2006, 2009) in Finland; and Banaji (2008), Buckingham (2012), and Livingstone (2009) in the U.K. (some of their work covers several EU countries); Bennett (2003, 2008, 2010), Levine (2004), Montgomery et al. (2004), and Shah et al. (2005) in the U.S.; Harris (2004) in Australia; Shah (2013) and Sreekumar (2007, 2013) in India; and Yang (2003) in China. Much of the research on the Internet and civic /political participation, however, addresses the digital dimension of citizenship in national contexts while my study addresses the transnational dimension to citizenship introduced by migration, media, and the global capital flows.

A majority of these studies are based in the global North, are quantitative in approach, and focus on youth. Since young people are considered the “digital natives,”² the focus on youth is not surprising. The prevalence of younger generations on the civic Internet is also evident in the high number of youth-oriented online civic initiatives that include campaigns, political networks, single-issue websites, and youth-led social movements. The literature in this area varies from utopian claims (for example, Benkler [2006], Castells [2010], Jenkins [2006] and

² Prensky (2001, p.1) introduces the term “digital natives” to argue that the rapid spread of digital technology starting in the 1990s has produced a generation of students -- the “digital natives” -- “who think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors -- the digital immigrants.” Prensky sees this younger generation as the “native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet.”

Shirky [2008]) who see the transformative impact of the Internet on democratic participation, to critical perspectives (for example, Morozov [2013] and Papacharissi [2002]), who predict a limited impact because of the limitations and social determinants of the technology. I have considered both the celebratory as well as critical arguments that these scholars advance in the analysis of the global civic web-sphere and have included in my study civic websites that are not just youth-oriented but welcome other groups.

There are a number of scholars, such as Couldry (2006), Dahlgren (2006), and Hermes (2006), who approach the Internet and citizenship from the cultural studies approach and I have drawn my methodological approach from them but, again, their work is Eurocentric. The websites that I have studied, on the other hand, are global in reach and content, and my research participants represent several different parts of the world.

Several of these researchers claim that even with the affordances of the Internet for civic engagement and global connections, a small proportion of the population, even among those with access to the Internet, use it for global civic work. For example, the availability of communication technology is no guarantee that it will be used for civic/political purposes (Bimber, 2000; Dahlgren 2007); most of the new media use by young people has been banal more than transformative; and youth use new media to connect with those similar to them rather than those in different socio-cultural locations (Boyd, 2008; Buckingham, 2008; Livingstone, 2009; Watkins, 2009). Bennett et al. (2011) observe that the flourishing use of the new forms of media has not resulted in a full realization of a mediated civic participatory culture and that participation in this culture remains uneven. Livingstone (2009) has made similar observations. Lin et al.'s (2010) study of youth in five Asian cities also notes that online entertainment-related activities are more popular among Asian youth than are civically-oriented activities.

Bennett (2008), Levine (2008), and Papacharissi (2010) look at both the sides of the argument and suggest that if we consider a broader definition of civic engagement (for example, as proposed by Beck [1997, 1998] and Giddens [1991, 1998]) and take into consideration issues so far considered private as worthy of public attention and unconventional ways of public engagement as valid, the picture is then not dismal. Beck observes the politics of youthful antipolitics, where enjoying oneself and caring for others are not mutually exclusive but rather strengthen one another. Giddens introduces the concept of life politics as the politics of self-actualizations in which day-to-day, individual, reflexive lifestyle choices play an important role. Furthermore, such an outlook suggests that the Internet can play a valuable role in civic participation notwithstanding the limitations and problems associated with online civic participation as a result of digital inequalities, the fragmentation of political discourse, and global capitalism (Papacharissi, 2002). Drawing our attention to some unconventional ways of civic engagement Papacharissi (2010), for example, points out five new civic habits -- the use of blogs, networks, and youtube, as well as social media news aggregation and collaborative filtering -- and argues that convergent technologies offer limitless options to citizens for expression and connection. Bennett et al.'s (2011) review of theory and research suggests that "today's youth are by and large adopting a qualitatively different style of citizenship from their parents and that the form and content of their media choices reflect this generational split." Bennett et al. observe three distinct avenues of citizenship: video production and sharing, social networking websites, and civic gaming (p. 393-423). These new tools and civic habits merit examination in determining the Internet's contribution to civic participation.

Shirky's (2008) celebratory claims about why the Internet has unprecedented advantage over its predecessors as a tool for group action is based on the Internet's capacity to facilitate

group formation at a low transaction costs:

Our electronic networks are enabling novel forms of collective action, enabling the creation of collaborative groups that are larger and more distributed than at any other time in history. The scope of work that can be done by noninstitutional groups is a profound challenge to the status quo. The collapse of transaction costs makes it easier for people to get together- so much easier, in fact that it is changing the world. The lowering of the costs is the driving force underneath the current revolution (...). (p.48).

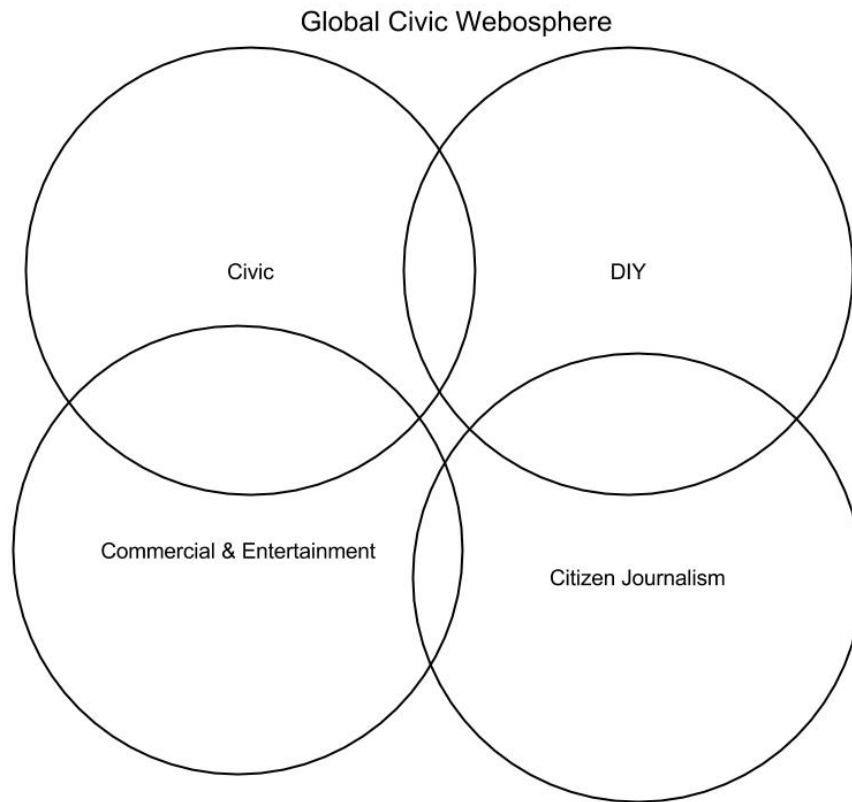
Shirky (2008) mentions three group activities that are enabled or improved by social tools on the Internet: sharing, cooperation, and collective action. As we can see, all three group activities are very important for forming groups and acting together, and therefore it is not surprising that civically interested people turn to the Internet and specifically to the civic websites when they want to join hands with other like-minded people for purposes of civic participation. Later in this chapter, I analyze the global civic websites to interrogate whether or not these claims about the potential of the Internet for civic engagement are fulfilled in the performance of these websites.

Now that we have some understanding of how the Internet lends itself to a specific type of civic participation, let us turn to the first of the three questions that I examine in this chapter: What kinds of spaces are available online for this civic participation? I observed four such types of spaces. The first set of spaces are those that are designed with the explicit purpose of facilitating civic participation; for example, websites that are focused on voting, specific public issues like climate change, health, or immigrant rights, and websites that facilitate civic or political collaborations and collective action. The second set of spaces are those that are not

specifically designed with civic purposes in mind, but are nonetheless used by individuals for a predominately DIY enactment of citizenship; for example, YouTube and various blogging platforms or social media like Facebook and Twitter. The third set of spaces are primarily designed and used for commercial and entertainment purposes, but some of these encourage pre-civic behaviors like sharing, collaboration, and building social capital; for example, Massively Multiplayer Online Gaming or fandom sites. Some online spaces can be a combination of civic and consumerist, for example, fair-trade online stores. And finally, the fourth type of spaces are global platforms for journalists/citizen journalists; these are focused around sharing news stories. Some examples of such platforms are Vocative, the Global Press Institute, and Thinkbrigade. Civic action may emerge from reports and stories shared on these platforms from all over the world. Figure six shows the four types of websites that may have civic potential.

(Continued on the next page)

Figure 7. Types of websites with civic potential.



The focus of my study is a subset of the first category of sites, i.e., the global/transnational civic websites. My study, however, also examines the second category of sites because an inductive analysis of my data shows that social media and blogs are an integral part of my participants' online civic engagement. I do not underestimate the potential of the third and the fourth categories but they are beyond the scope of the present study. I do plan, however, to examine the civic potential of entertainment and consumerist sites in my future research.

I am aware that all of the global civic engagement taking place in the world does not necessarily take place on civic websites, and also that all the civically interested women are not participants in the civic websites that I am examining and may have other avenues for enacting

transcultural citizenship. The global/transnational civic websites, however, remain one of the important venues for experiencing transcultural citizenship and nurturing an individual's civic identity as a global or world citizen. I am limiting my examination to those websites that have been designed and that operate with specific civic purposes in mind. Because my primary interest is in transnational/transcultural civic engagement, I look at websites that are global or at least transnational (involving a group of nations in a particular global region) with respect to the issues that they address and the membership from which they draw.

Transnational Civic Engagement Websites

Transnational civic engagement websites can truly be called the phenomenon of the digital era. It is not surprising that since youth are considered “digital natives,” a large number of these websites are youth-oriented and much of the scholarly work examining such websites has also therefore been youth-centered. Montgomery (2008), for example, observes that in the late 1990s, several non-profits launched such websites designed with the explicit purpose of encouraging civic and political engagement in young people. Bachen et al. (2008) conducted a content analysis of 73 U.S.-based civic websites and Bennett et al.'s (2011) study of the youth civic web includes 90 such websites. These and other researchers have a mixed bag of findings about the effectiveness of civic websites with reference to civic participation. Bennett et al., for example, argue that these sites combine the affordances of the Internet, young peoples' proclivity to digital media production and peer-to-peer sharing, and a growing interest in transnational citizenship. According to Bennett et al., these websites also show a lot of potential for youth identity construction and peer-to-peer exchanges at the transnational level, while Raynes-Goldie and Walker (2008) see the role of online civic engagement tools as enhancing and empowering real-world action.

At the same time, some scholars and activists have critiqued these websites. Specifically taking to task the website TakingITGlobal, Vernon's (2008) blog calls the activities on such websites "slacktivism," or talk that does not translate into action, while Bennett (2008) observes that "[y]outh sites often seem less social, more moderated, less open to posting and sharing media content, and more top-down compared to those pertaining to dating, friends, games, music or video" (p. 12). Empirical work done by Montgomery (2004), Bers (2008), and Raynes-Goldie and Walker (2008) shows that observations on both sides are valid. Though research on transnational websites is limited (one example is the 2008 study of TakingITGlobal by Raynes-Goldie and Walker), Montgomery's observations on youth-oriented civic websites, which are based on a survey of more than 300 websites (mostly U.S.-based) created by and for young people, may be valid for transnational sites as well. Montgomery and her team found diversity in goals, constituencies, and the extent of participation and interaction possible on these sites; she notes that "[a]lthough most were rooted in preexisting organizations and institutions a few were solely creatures of the digital universe. And while many of the web sites were little more than static 'brochure ware' the study also found numerous examples of innovative uses of the interactive digital technologies for a variety of civic and political purposes" (2008, p. 27). The study acknowledges the problem of the civic web facing a stiff competition for attention in the highly "seductive and engaging youth media environment" (p. 27). An online civic engagement landscape survey by Rynes-Goldie and Walker (2008) identifies maintenance, design, and/or usability issues, funding, lack of robust and sophisticated collaboration tools, sustainability, and lack of multiple languages as major issues with regards to youth-oriented civic web sites (2008, p.184). Amidst these observations, my study specifically examines the potential of such civic websites for transnational civic engagement and the facilitation of global/transcultural

citizenship.

Selection of Websites for the Study

The websites included in the sample for this analysis were drawn in following the ways:

1. The initial pool of websites was identified through a thorough Internet search in the beginning of the study in 2010. This set of websites and their Facebook pages were also used to post the online survey.

2. Some websites were selected from those that the participants in my online survey mentioned as the five most important online communities for them.

3. Some websites were added from those that my participants mentioned during the interviews and the list they sent me after the interviews (see Appendix Four for a complete list of websites included in the study). I visited these websites frequently and informally throughout the period of my study and especially from 2012 to 2014. Formal examination of selected websites, however, was carried out three times during the study: first, in 2011 when I was exploring the web-sphere; at that time, I took memos, observed participation, and spent time hanging out on websites; second, in 2012, soon after I conducted the survey and also after I interviewed each woman and looked at her online participation; and third, between December 2013 and April 2014, when I analyzed each site formally using the key affordances of the Internet and wrote up the findings. For each website, I visited the home page, each parent tab from the drop down menu (e.g., about, projects, themes, mission, people, etc.), membership/community, and hyperlinks to other organizations. I was specifically looking at how these websites used the specific affordances of the Internet and how the use of these affordances contributed to members'/participants' civic identity and citizenship experience.

My review of the research shows mostly the studies that have been done on youth-

oriented websites. There are, however, an increasing number of sites that are issue-specific, appeal to other identities apart from age, and are more open to participation from older individuals. I have included such sites in my study. For the purpose of my study, I am categorizing the 28 global/transnational civic websites in my sample on two different dimensions: one, orientation (if the website is single-issue, identity, or campaign oriented); and two, management structure (if the website is bottom up, managed, or top down).

1. Single-issue, identity, and campaign oriented websites. Groups, networks, and communities of people need a shared element as the basis for their formation. Global websites are groups or networks of people who in the absence of a shared nationality or ethnicity come together around other elements. I observed three such dominant elements around which global civic communities or networks are formed: a particular identity axis like youth or gender; a common investment in a particular issue like HIV/AIDS or climate change; or the desire to intervene in multiple issues in favor of social justice. These elements, again, are not strictly compartmentalized and often overlap in the case of different websites.

Single-issue based websites are those that focus on a single issue of global interest. Some of the global websites in my study are single-issue based websites, for example, the Global Human Rights Education Network, Association for Progressive Communications, Diplo Internet Governance Community, and Women on Web. Some issue-based websites, such as the Peace and Collaborative Development Network and Peace x Peace, address interlinked issues under a larger umbrella.

Identity-based websites draw members with an affinity to one or more axes of their intersectional identities (see Chapter Three for a detailed discussion on intersectional identities). For example, “youth” is an identity axis that is at the foundation of a large number of websites

that address multiple youth-oriented issues; for example, UNOY Peacebuilders, Y-Peer, and UNICEF Voices of Youth. Similarly, PeaceWomen.org, feministing.com, The International Museum of Women, and AWID have been founded primarily based on gender but also lean towards having a feminist ideology. There are websites that combine the age, gender, and geo-political axes of identities like the Southern African Young Women's Network, or identities and issues, for example the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS.

The campaign-oriented websites attract a broader membership from multiple age groups and identities and focus on collective action on specific campaigns. Fundraising for specific causes and petitions are two of their main strategies for mobilizing collective action. Avaaz, Greenpeace.org, change.org, and A Better Community for All (ABC4all) are some examples of such websites.

2. Bottom-up, managed, or top-down management structure on websites.

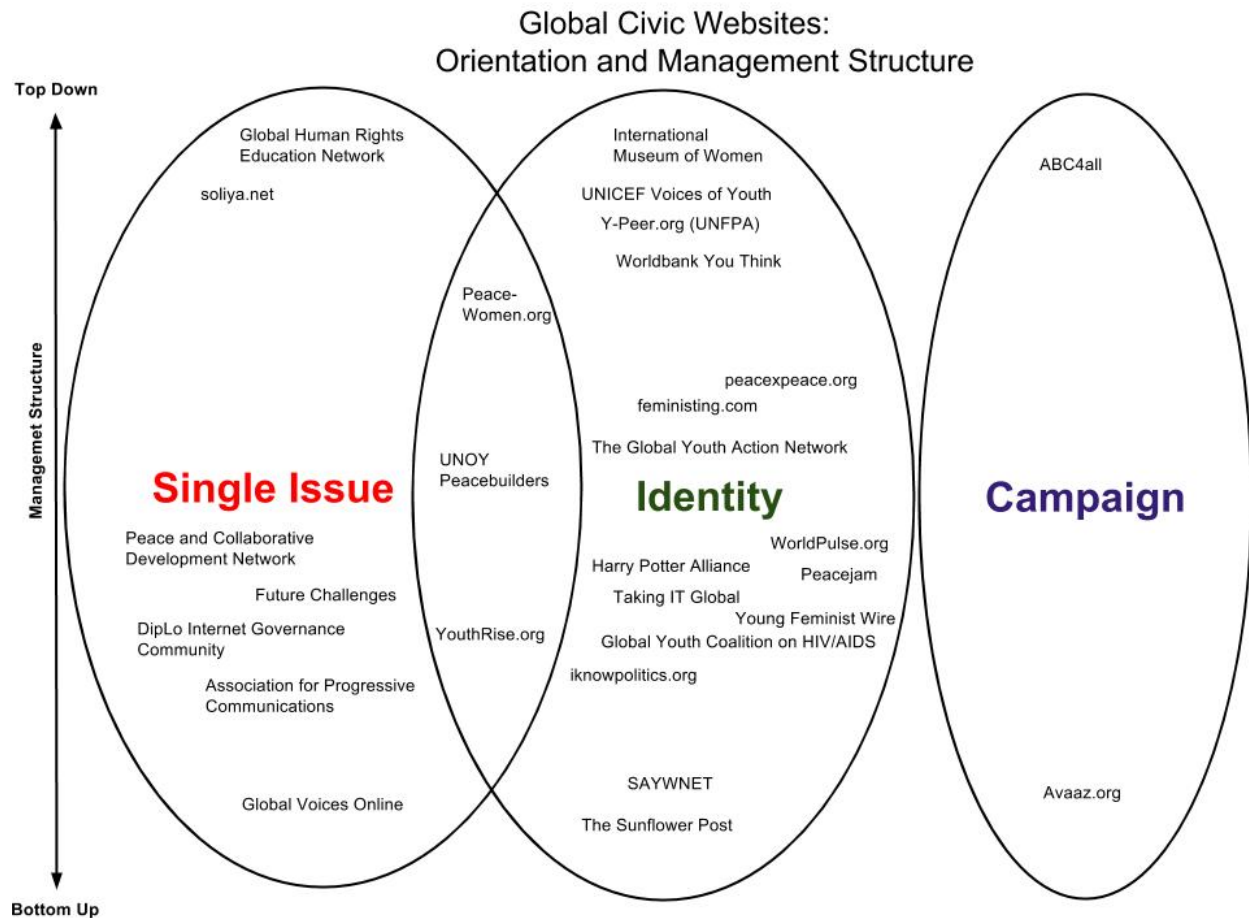
Global/transnational websites come into existence in several different ways. Some emerge from a group of people spontaneously coming together and are fueled by user-generated content and contributions. These are bottom-up websites. Some others are larger networks that welcome user-generated content and take into account their members' opinions in deciding the website's vision and mission, but they also have a core group of leaders, advisors, and administrators that make important decisions, act as spokespersons, manage the day-to-day functioning of the websites, and play a key role in fundraising and deciding the trajectory of the website's development. This core group includes both paid and volunteer managers. These are managed websites. The top-down websites are directly developed and managed by an existing institution, mostly offline. The resources, policies, and development of such websites is directly governed by a parent institution. These are more heavily moderated and a sizeable portion of the content is

generated by the organizers with a varying degree of user-generated content.

The SunFlower Post, for example, spontaneously emerged from the friendship and dialogue between two young women who then invited other young women to join them in a mostly informal network; it still remains a small and intimate network powered by individual contributions. Some online communities emerge spontaneously around fandom. The international community nerdfighting.com emerged out of a huge fan following of the Vlog brothers on YouTube. Some bottom-up networks, like the Peace and Collaborative Development Network (PCDN), are moderated but are still mostly fueled by user generated content. Websites often change their composition as they develop. TakingITGlobal and Global Voices Online, for example, emerged out of individual efforts and inspiration but grew to become formal organizations with vast global participation and corporate and philanthropic funding and partnerships that would require formal management. Websites like UNICEF Voices of Youth, UNFPA's Y-Peer, and Worldbank's YouThink are examples of top-down websites that are directly born out of institutional policy and are controlled by these institutions.

Depending on their style and structure of management, these websites also vary in their funding sources, from completely member-supported (e.g., Avaaz), to those surviving on advertisements that do not clash with their mission (e.g., feministing.com), to those receiving support from various foundations (e.g., Future Challenges), to those completely funded by an organization (e.g., Voices of Youth). In figure 7, I categorize the sites I have examined on these parameters but it should be noted that there are several sites that fall somewhere in between and defy strict categorization.

Figure 8. Global civic websites: Orientation and management structure.



Global/Transnational Websites and Civic Identities

Now I turn to the second question that I examine in this chapter: What kind of civic identities, values, and practices do global/transnational websites encourage? Scholarly literature on identities and values reiterates the observation that civic identities and civic participation are co-constitutional (Calhoun, 1992; Dahlgren 2005). How one sees oneself as a citizen influences the civic spaces and practices one chooses, but participation in activities and spaces also shapes how one sees oneself as a citizen. My analysis of this question is based on the following

observations on the selected websites:

- (1). How do these websites construct, and recognize their participants as citizens?
- (2). What are the civic values that these sites valorize?
- (3). What kind of opportunities and features exist on these websites for expressing global/transcultural civic identities and values?
- (4). What kind of practices are possible on these websites through which participants enact transcultural/global citizenship?

Recognizing and shaping civic identities: global, informed, connected, and active citizens

To answer the question how the websites construct and recognize their participants as citizens, I examined the home pages, mastheads, pictures and videos, mission statements, community profiles, and about us sections on the selected websites. Four common elements emerged in my analysis -- the participants are seen and hailed as citizens who are (a) global, (b) informed, (c) working collectively with others, and (d) are active and involved. I explain in detail these elements in the following four sections.

(a). The participants on all of the websites are first and foremost hailed as global or world citizens and the potential scope of their efficacy is envisioned as global. The websites prominently display the number of countries represented on their website; for example, World Pulse has 190 countries, GYCA has 170 countries, TIGEd has 140 countries, and Y-PEER has 36 countries. Their global focus is also visible in their self-descriptions. UNICEF Voices of Youth's "connect" section, for example, identifies itself as "a worldwide network for in-school and out-of-school youth activists and global citizens." World Pulse announces its mission is "to lift and unite women's voices to accelerate their impact for the world." The participants are, however, seen as locally rooted and are encouraged to be active in their local areas. Individual,

culturally rooted, and geo-politically situated stories are given much importance in a large number of global websites. Peace x Peace, for example, calls on women to tell their first-person accounts under “Voices from the Frontline.” The call says, “Everyone has a story to tell. Every effort and every accomplishment deserves to be recognized. ...This is your chance to influence what people around the world know about your country, organization, profession, or passion.” The motto of Future Challenges is “Thinking global, living local (...).” Similarly, the Harry Potter Alliance and the Student World Assembly websites direct visitors to national/local chapters where they can participate. Another example of locally rooted global citizenship is Peacejam’s interactive map that shows their local projects all over the world with an inviting caption: “Find projects happening in your own area.” It thus establishes an instant local-global connection and drives home the point that being globally active does not uproot a person from their local engagement.

Identity-based websites also reinforce the importance of the chosen identity axis, such as being a youth or being a woman or a mother, but this is done in a global context that implies that universal solidarity is possible based on such identity axes. Some of the websites recognize youth and women as the “marginalized” identities and represent the websites as the spaces that “give voice” to those who normally don’t have opportunities for voicing their concerns and opinions. At the same time, these identities are represented as empowering and possessing several special qualities, such as passion, courage, and open-mindedness. This approach may essentialize the identities in some way but it also encourages a positive self-image. The following excerpts from the United Network of Young Peacebuilders shows both the discursive strategies. In the first part it recognizes that young people are often neglected actors in development: “It is estimated that 50 per cent of the world’s population is under 30 years of age.

However young people are often neglected actors in development, including peace and civil society building processes, especially in post-accord phases.” In the second part, however, young people are recognized as having special qualities that are valuable for the development of peaceful citizens and societies. For example, “Young people are more open to change; future-oriented, idealistic and innovative, courageous, and knowledgeable about their peers’ realities.” Also, the website is portrayed as a space or a community that respects their youth identity. For example, “At UNOY Peacebuilders, we believe that youth are the vehicle of change and that by engaging young people we can combat potential threats to peace and work in a sustainable way.” Thus specific identities like youth and women are represented as the foundations of universal solidarity and as possessing special qualities that make them valuable global civic actors. At the same time, these identities are represented as marginalized and the global websites are imagined as empowering communities that will give them the power and voice needed to make a global impact.

(b). Being an “informed” citizen is valorized in the way the websites construct global citizens. Knowledge is considered power. This is visible from the masthead and the motto prominently displayed on some website homepages. For example, for TakingITGlobal, it is “Inspire Inform Involve,” while SAFAIDS’s motto is “Knowledge for Action: The Power to Make a Difference.” This is also reflected in the way the websites use the unlimited capacity for storage that is provided by the Internet. Several sites allocate a lot of space and resources to information on global issues, current events, and hyperlinks leading to more information. This observation applies to all the three types of websites. Managed and top-down websites contain more information than the spontaneous ones, probably because of having more organizational resources.

(c.) The sites reinforce the notion that a global citizen does not act in isolation.

Networking, connection, collaboration, and collective action are considered very important and most websites express this as their major role. Therefore, they also provide features that facilitate group formation and action. Many websites refer to themselves as a “community.” The United Network of Young Peacebuilders, for example, announces their mission as “bringing youth together for peace,” while Peace x Peace’s mission statement includes that it “strengthens women’s capacity to connect across divides” and “nurtures a global network of peacebuilders in 120 countries.”

(d.) Finally, global civic websites encourage citizenship that is engaged and active. They see members as active and involved and want to encourage a similar self-perception in the participants. For example, the Avaaz website says “...that people who join the community through a campaign on one issue go on to take action on another issue, and then another. This is a source of great hope: that our dreams rhyme, and that, together, we can build the bridge from the world we have to the world we all want.” The websites also see their role as facilitating individual and collective agency and “change” is definitely the buzzword in these spaces on the Internet. World Pulse, for example, announces its motto as “connecting women’s voices to transform our world” while Peacejam describes its role as “Nobel Peace Laureates mentoring youth to change the world.”

Later in the chapter, when I examine the various affordances of the Internet that the websites use, we can see a clear reflection of these four aspects of civic identity -- global, informed, connected, and active -- that the websites encourage in the ways that they use the affordances for global civic participation. Next, I examine the civic values that the global websites represent and shape.

The Core Values Represented and Shaped by the Global Websites

I examined two kinds of communication in order to identify the core values as they are valorized on the websites: one, between the administrators/leaders and participants; and two, amongst participants. This was done through an examination of sections like about me, profiles, member stories, pictures and videos, blogs, endorsements, and incentives like ribbons and badges that participants earn on some websites for their civic activities. The first was comparatively easy as most websites clearly articulate the values they support on their websites. For example, “...underlying Avaaz campaigns is a set of values—the conviction that we are all human beings first, and privileged with responsibilities to each other, to future generations, and to the planet. The issues we work on are particular expressions of those commitments (...).” Feministing.net is another example of a clear articulation of values as part of the website moderation policy. They announce that “feministing editors believe that racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and hate speech constitute anti-feminism and have no place on the site. Additionally, posts that contain no feminist lens or analysis, or that are ‘spammy’ in nature may also be held for moderation.”

The core values expressed again and again on these websites are responsibility, empathy, collectivity, sharing, humanity, justice, and a dream for a healthier, happier, fairer, and more equitable society. The justice and fairness aspects extend on some websites to include animals and the planet, as well as to “future generations.” Most of the websites, even when some of them have paid staff and administrators, emphasize the value of volunteering to keep online civic work going. Feministing, Global Voices Online, Harry Potter Alliance, TakingITGlobal, and several others prominently display the role volunteering plays in sustaining their activities.

The bottom-up and some managed websites that welcome user-generated content also

give opportunities to their members to express civic identities and values. TakingITGlobal, for example, publishes member stories, has individual pages for members where they can display their civic interests and values, and provides discussion forums on civic themes. Several websites like PCDN, Young Feminist Wire, and Feministing feature blogs written by members and guests, and I Know Politics features regular e-discussions for members. Most websites allow reader comments on their content. It is likely that the participants actually endorse the same values as the websites but we cannot rule out some impression-management, where participants express values they think will be appreciated and endorsed by other members of the network.

The Unique Affordances of the Internet

Finally, we move on to the fourth question: What kind of citizenship practices are made possible through global civic websites -- practices that may shape global civic identities in participants and provide opportunities to enact transcultural citizenship? To answer this question, I juxtapose the affordances of the Internet with the transcultural citizenship framework that I have developed using the seven dimensions of identity, values, information, connection, expression, dialogue, and action (see Chapter Three).

The literature review in the beginning of this chapter mentioned various affordances of the Internet that make it a viable tool for global civic participation. I have synthesized the literature to formulate a set of seven interconnected affordances of the Internet. These are sharing of user-generated content; ease of multi-modal expression, publication, and distribution; transborder networking; flexibility to choose real-time or synchronic communication; efficient and low-cost many-to-many communication; vast storage and archiving capacities; and hyperlinks. Together these affordances help amplify the scope and scale of an individual's civic

experience across physical and cultural boundaries through transnational connections, sharing, conversations, collaborations, and to some extent collective action.

It is important to note that although I use various websites to illustrate each affordance in the following analysis, most websites use several of these affordances for multiple purposes that may include one or more of the following: facilitating expression, donating, mentoring, voting, signing petitions, joining transnational projects, supporting other activists, creating or taking advantage of opportunities for offline activities, and making local-global connections. The analysis also shows that by using these affordances fully the websites reinforce and shape civic identities that are global, informed, connected, and active as discussed earlier in the chapter.

1. Collaborative Knowledge Construction/User Generated Content

The possibility of having user-generated content on the websites has been the key difference between the web 1.0 and 2.0, particularly as one does not need any advanced computational skills like programming or coding to post content to websites. This affordance has changed civic practices by blurring the boundaries between producers and consumers of Internet-based content, as now one can simultaneously be both. This affordance makes websites interactive (and therefore more appealing) and generates popular knowledge resources like Wikipedia.

One of the major contributions of this affordance for civic participation is that it allows situated knowledges to be shared with a wider audience and thus provides the necessary plurality to civic discourse. The publication of user-generated content has many benefits for transcultural citizenship: the absence of gatekeeping allows a larger number and variety of voices and thus is especially helpful for some marginalized voices (but only if they have Internet access and the skills necessary to access the information); an issue gets examined from multiple perspectives;

information from primary sources helps other participants to humanize the context of an issue; strategies, tools, success stories and failures get shared; and, there is the possibility for knowledge construction to become comparatively more democratic (even when it has been observed that a small percentage of people usually give the most input, as Shirky [2008] notes).

Several global websites that I examined avail of this unique affordance of the web 2.0. I give two examples to demonstrate how websites use this affordance. The Diplo Internet Governance Community, “a community of IG and ICT policy professionals from around the world,” requires one to become a member and create a profile page -- but it is a very easy process. Once it is done, as Diplo announces, “your page becomes your blog.” The members can upload or embed videos, photos, slides, and audio clips in their posts (here the website also uses the second affordance of multi-modal expression and publication), post status updates, and invite comments and feedback from other members. This creates opportunities not only for expression but also for dialogue and networking with other members from around the world. The users are also allowed to join and start their own theme groups to facilitate issue-based participation.

Young Feminist Wire, for example, combines input from the website leaders and users to make the website a resource pool useful to young women’s activism. The leaders contribute a monthly blog post on important global current events and developments, provide e-learning opportunities, showcase a monthly profile of an outstanding initiative created or led by young women, and manage directories of young women-led initiatives, programs, and young women online. The membership is free for young women around the world who contribute news, information on their own organization and initiatives, resources, advice, and tools for activism. The leaders and members also share calls for internships, jobs, conferences, and opportunities for funding and training.

The Association for Progressive Communications and Global Youth Coalition for HIV/AIDS are some other examples of websites that use various features like Wikis, forums, discussion boards, and comment sections to invite user-generated content and facilitate collaborative knowledge construction. Global Voices Online is a website that is almost completely shaped and sustained by user-generated content. As the previous chapters show, a large number of my interview participants (almost two-thirds) represent the global South or have an immigrant status. I also saw active participation from individuals from the global South on civic websites like Global Voices. Of course, we cannot disregard the digital inequalities in the global South and the privileged backgrounds of those on the Internet but still, the collaborative knowledge construction on these sites does contribute to reorienting global communication and information flows from North to South. On these sites, we see flows that go not only from South to North but also from South to South. This is a major change that the Internet has brought to global civic engagement.

2. The Ease of Multi-Modal Expression, Publication and Distribution

In earlier types of mass media, three roles -- the writer (or artist), the publisher, and the distributor -- were invested with different individuals or teams. With the web 2.0, a single individual can occupy all the three of these roles from a small home office or a bedroom. In this way, the second affordance is closely aligned to the first (that of collaborative knowledge construction and user-generated content). This affordance has challenged the traditional gatekeeping roles of editors and publishers and has cut down the cost of the distribution of content to a fraction of earlier processes. Besides, this affordance broadens an individual's repertoire for civic expression from formal prose to using art, pictures, videos, and sound. It enhances interactivity and facilitates the sharing of expression globally (technically every public

webpage has a scope of being viewed globally). The audio and visual features, especially those shared from primary sources, also provide a closer and richer experience of other lands, people, and their cultures and may arouse a greater appreciation as well as empathy for their situations. Exposure to multicultural content also encourages critical thinking about one's own cultural practices and values.

Most of the websites that I examined use the affordance of the web 2.0 to make it possible for their users to contribute multi-modal content (Long form prose, however, has not completely lost its importance). TakingITGlobal, for example, instantly draws the viewer's attention to the multiple modes that the organizers as well as the participants use to communicate. Under their Youth Media section, TIG facilitates sharing expression via blogs, interactive educational games, a global gallery, *Panorama-Zine* (an online magazine for youth writing), and TIG magazines (printed publications). TIG also uses pictures and videos to provide information on global issues, and runs a four-week digital exchange program that connects youth from 30 countries. Anyone can register to participate in the program that uses both computer and mobile platforms to make it easy for youth to participate. TIG provides a weekly "mini-mission" to encourage intercultural dialogue through photo uploading and discussion on four themes: "daily life," "my roots," "our vision," and "our quest." According to Jennifer Corriero, TIG co-founder, through such peer-to-peer global exchange, the concept of 'other' shifts to an outlook of intercultural connection.

Several other sites -- like the International Museum of Women, Global Voices Online, and Peace x Peace -- encourage and facilitate multi-modal expression. The huge value of this affordance can only be grasped by recalling the pre-Internet era and the effort and money that went into sharing a single article or a picture with just one other person who didn't live next

door.

3. Transborder Networks

This affordance allows individuals to connect with others beyond their geographic proximity or national borders. Making transnational connections and international collaborations in order to resolve civic issues is not a completely new activity, but in the pre-Internet era, such initiatives were mostly supported by governments or global institutions. The Internet has given the power to individuals to initiate and maintain connections with fellow humans across geographic boundaries. This is possible because, at least presently and in most cases, the Internet is not completely under the control of national governments.

The Internet's affordance of facilitating transborder connectivity and networks is at the heart of the global and collaborative nature of the websites that I examined. Transborder connectivity makes it possible for individual participants to find global resonance for their individual and local concerns, get support and solidarity from a wide range of sources, gain greater visibility for their civic work, and find opportunities to engage in transnational/transcultural civic activities. The websites I examined provide opportunities for transborder connections in various ways, such as by providing directories of members and organizations so that members can find people to connect with, hyperlinks to global organizations, and technical means for sending messages to individual members or organizations. The websites also host theme- or issue-based networks, manage list-serves, and provide information on transnational offline opportunities like training programs and conferences. Compared to the bottom-up and the top-down websites, the managed websites make the best use of this affordance because their members can freely interact with one another and there is wider peer-to-peer sharing as compared to the top-down websites; at the same time, the managed websites have greater

resources for hosting and managing global networks and up-to-date global information as compared to the bottom-up websites.

The Peace and Collaborative Development Network (PCDN) is an example of a free professional networking website whose mission is “Building Bridges, Networks and Expertise Across Sectors.” My online survey had received a good response from PCDN members and four of my interview participants are members of PCDN. This global network currently has over 31,000 members and receives 300,000+ hits a month. PCDN’s approach is that of horizontal networking, which encourages free member-to-member exchange (albeit with some moderation). This is achieved through features like chat, instant messaging, individual blogs, discussion threads, and regular announcements from members as well as organizers about news, opportunities, resources, research, and challenges from the broad areas of international development, conflict resolution, gender mainstreaming, human rights, social entrepreneurship, and related fields.

Global civic websites do not only provide networking opportunities for individuals. There are websites like the the United Network of Young (UNOY) Peace Builders and the Global Youth Action Network (GYAN) that facilitate transnational networking among youth organizations. UNOY Peace Builders is a non-profit youth-led network of 60 member organizations based mainly in South America, Africa, and Asia, while GYAN is a network of youth-led and youth-serving organizations in more than 190 countries that also offers web-based project management tools apart from an online global community.

4 & 5. Real-Time as well as Asynchronous Communication, and Many-to-Many Communication

Earlier media allowed either real-time (e.g., via the telephone and radio) or asynchronous

(e.g., via newspapers and films) communication. Prior to the Internet, different forms of media were used for asynchronous and many-to-many communication practices, but the Internet affords its users the flexibility of choosing the type of communication that suits the occasion and the purpose. On the Internet, one can engage in both of these types of communication at will. This affordance allows strong as well as weak ties to form because participants can keep themselves informed or share information through asynchronous features like blogs, comments, and status updates, but use the real-time communication features like chat, instant messaging, and video conferencing for engaging in dialogue or deliberation with a select few.

Earlier media also did not allow several producers and consumers to engage in a conversation simultaneously. The web 2.0 makes this possible and this affordance has a strong influence on group formation, sharing, dialogue, and collaboration. Both of these communication-related affordances facilitate mobilization and collective civic action for which communication is a key component. Also, the affordance of simultaneous many-to-many communication has a vital influence on the day-to-day management of the websites.

Peace x Peace, Soliya, TIG, and Diplo Internet Governance are examples of websites that use this affordance effectively. Peace x Peace describes itself as “the international organization that lifts and multiplies women’s voices, strengthens women’s capacity to connect across divides, promotes leadership and gender equity, and nurtures a global network of peace builders in 120 countries.” The two communications-related affordances of the Internet play an important role in achievement of all of these missions. Peace x Peace uses weekly emails and blogs, a video series, and publications for asynchronous communication. At the same time, it runs a program called Connection Point, which is a global dialogue initiative connecting Arab, Muslim, and Western women around the world. Connection Point is a forum for open, informal, real-time

communication that can humanize distant peoples and expand worldviews to embrace the possibility of peace. In phase one of Connection Point, the website invites women to “seek, discover, and learn about one another and to begin to chip away at damaging stereotypes.” This is mostly done through many-to-many asynchronous communication. Phase two of the initiative is the Connection Point Dialogues program, which uses videoconferencing as a platform for discussions between women from Arab, Muslim and Western communities around the world.

Another such website, Soliya, aims at promoting greater cross-cultural cooperation and compassion. Among its several initiatives, Exchange 2.0 uses new media technologies for “virtual exchanges” among college students. Its flagship initiative Connect is an online cross-cultural education program that has linked students from over 100 universities in 27 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Europe, and North America. Soliya also uses a video conferencing application for real-time dialogue with the aim to “build respectful relationships across national, cultural, religious and ideological boundaries.” Another example of successful many-to-many real time communication is Diplo’s successful remote participation working group during their Internet Governance Forum in 2009, where people from all over the world could participate in the forum from their homes.

These affordances also facilitate innovative ways of managing the websites. The Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA), for example, is using Podio, an online CRM tool for their team to use in order to work together from anywhere. In another example, the following excerpt from the Avaaz website claims that the new technologies provide its team with “nimbleness” and “flexibility”:

Previous international citizens' groups and social movements have had to build a constituency for each separate issue, year by year and country by country, in order to

reach a scale that could make a difference. Today, thanks to new technology and a rising ethic of global interdependence, that constraint no longer applies. Where other global civil society groups are composed of issue-specific networks of national chapters, each with its own staff, budget, and decision-making structure, Avaaz has a single, global team with a mandate to work on any issue of public concern--allowing campaigns of extraordinary nimbleness, flexibility, focus, and scale.

Thus, the communicative flexibility afforded by the Internet not only allows members to communicate more effectively and to form groups and networks; it also enhances the effectiveness of communication between administrators and members and between the administrators themselves. It allows organizations like Avaaz and GYAC to work with a global team at a relatively low cost.

My examination of the use of the two communication-related affordances indicates that several sites in my study host good features for communication between site managers and participants, as well as for asynchronous communication among members through blogs and comments, but few websites actually make effective use of the affordance of real-time, many-to-many communication.

6. Information Storage and Archiving

The vast storage capacity afforded by the Internet allows the websites to store a massive amount of information, which makes them a virtual repository. This serves two functions: one, the websites can provide their participants with an abundance of new information and two, they can archive information of importance. Since the websites as well as my participants consider information an important dimension of good citizenship, being aware and creating awareness are

considered necessary civic activities. The ready availability of information from multiple sources provides a context for the participant taking action, may make fact checking easier (or in some instances may cause confusion and a sense of being overwhelmed, as discussed later in the chapter), and allows for multiple perspectives on an issue. Archived information helps in understanding of context around any issue and with grasping of larger trends. Archiving also allows a website to preserve the history of its own civic work and evolution as an organization. The optimum use of this affordance towards global civic engagement, however, depends on the human and technical resources of the individual websites to present the information in a way it can be easily understood and applied to civic contexts, and also on the capacity of the participants to synthesize and interpret the vast amount of information.

Several websites among the ones I examined store and archive information in user-friendly ways so that their participants can easily retrieve the information and use it towards civic activities. YouthRise, for example, is a youth-led global drug policy and harm reduction organization. The YouthRise website stores a range of resources on drug policy and related issues. Their resources are comprised of annual reports, statistics, videos, presentations, peer education guides, drug policy series, academic papers, briefing papers, and fact sheets all neatly organized as retrievable sections. Similarly, UNICEF's Voices of Youth has readily retrievable information on human rights, poverty and hunger, education, environment, health, HIV & AIDS, violence, war, and conflict.

Peacejam uses this affordance to archive all of its previous projects so that participants get an idea of the kinds of projects peacejam supports, while the Harry Potter Alliance has archived all of the media coverage they have received so far in order to give its visitors an idea of the significance of its civic work. On one hand this makes it easy for the participants to make

informed decisions while on the other hand the pre-packaged information presented from the website/organization's viewpoint may limit independent decision making in users.

7. Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are not unique to the web 2.0, as they were available on web 1.0 as well, but this affordance is important in global civic engagement because it allows the websites to direct their members to additional sources of information, relevant organizations, and networks. In doing so, it broadens their scope of civic engagement beyond the selected website. Avaaz, for example, always provides its members with a selection of hyperlinks that provide information, news, analysis, and history about the issue in consideration so that they can understand the context of an issue before supporting a campaign.

The availability of hyperlinks on websites makes it easy for the participants to connect the information and communication on the website to other interesting sources, organizations, and people. This affordance helps people to explore unfamiliar sources and connect with like-minded organizations and people they would not normally encounter in the physical world. At times, it also creates interest in new issues. World Bank's YouThink, for example, provides 15 hyperlinks to other international civic organizations, 7 links to those associated with donation and loans, 6 under the title "Speak Out" to organizations and websites that facilitate citizen expression, 14 links for global volunteering opportunities, and 15 links to organizations offering internships.

The above discussion on the unique affordances of the Internet used by the civic websites shows that when the websites use the affordances of the Internet well, the citizenship practices they facilitate resonate with my participants' articulation of citizenship (see Chapter Three) using a relational, discursive, and affective approach. They also facilitate the mission of global civic

websites to shape civic actors who are global in orientation, informed, and engaged. It is these affordances that make the Internet a viable and attractive civic engagement tool -- certainly for young people but also for older people, as my study shows. Of course, individuals and groups whose civic goals and tactics we may not endorse due to their violent or destructive approach can also use these affordances. Some of these affordances also pose challenges for meaningful civic engagement, as discussed in the next section.

The Limitations of Global/Transnational Websites

Despite taking advantage of the Internet's unique affordances for facilitating civic engagement, the digital nature of engagement poses several limitations and challenges for the websites and the participants alike. In fact, some of the benefits provided by the affordances -- for example, easy entry and access to global networks and the unlimited quantity of information -- also create problems. I discuss some of these challenges below.

The Impermanent Nature of Content on the Web

Because of the ease of creating web pages and web-based groups, many new groups arise daily on the Internet, but all of them do not develop into sustainable communities. New Facebook groups are created and left unnurtured and civic blogs suffer from inattention. In the course of my study, I witnessed SunFlowerPost lose its vibrant participation, an active global community like YouthNoise completely disappear, and the International Museum of Women announce its merger with the Global Fund for Women (and consequently it lost its original identity).

Inconsistent Participation

All of the three types of civic websites -- bottom-up, managed, and top-down -- suffer from inconsistent participation, but the bottom-up types suffer the most. The bottom-up websites

depend on individual motivation and volunteering. For individuals who are not full-time activists, their civic role is performed amidst competing personal, social, and professional demands. Most of my interview participants spoke about low phases when their civic participation was minimal, a result of several different reasons. The nature of weak ties, the option of remaining a lurker, the absence of any penalty for opting out, and the lack of social sanction one experiences in close-knit offline groups may result in a low level of commitment. For example, TIG boasts 450,000 members at this point, but my examination revealed that a large number of these members have only visited the site one or two times, some have not been active for more than a year, and for some others their participation has been limited to one blog post or a couple of contributions to discussion threads. The large and managed websites like TIG, however, usually have a core group of stable members who are highly motivated and often at least a small paid administrative staff, while the top-down websites have full organizational support. Because of this, even when participation from peripheral members keeps fluctuating, these websites can maintain the critical mass of active members necessary to sustain the website.

Spam Members and Incivility

The easy entry into global networks combined with anonymity or identity play that the Internet allows can bring spam members to the site. I found several members on TIG who used the site to announce a business. Moderated/managed websites usually have a strict rule about respectful interactions and try to check incivility, but constant moderation requires human and technical resources.

Uneven Quality of Deliberation

Shirky (2008) points to the change that the Internet has brought to public expression and publication of content. Whereas earlier media like newspapers and television filtered content

before publication, on the Internet, publication usually happens first and filtering occurs only afterwards. This encourages public expression but also results in shallow, superficial, casual, and poorly written content going public, with the onus to retrieve meaningful and high quality content on the individual participant. Anonymity or lack of personal and social cues online makes it difficult to ascertain the background of the person posting the content and this is seen as a problem by some of my participants because of the lack of context for the posting.

Uncertain Impact of Participation

Livingstone (2009) cautions us against confusing participation in the website as equal to participation in the actual issue. Many global/transnational civic websites have “giving voice” or “getting the voices heard” (of youth or of women, for example) as their mission. Levine (2004) and Livingstone (2009), among others, have raised the point of audience for such voices. What happens after you “get your voice heard” is important. Only a few websites, like GYAN or GYCA, articulate on the website who their audience is for the voices expressed. GYCA, for example clearly articulates on its website that,

GYCA seeks to improve HIV and AIDS policies and programming geared toward young people by facilitating the inclusion of skilled young leaders in decision-making that affects our lives. For example, GYCA has coordinated the inclusion of young leaders on government delegations through which they have addressed the UN General Assembly and dialogued directly with Ministers of Health and Education. GYCA has secured prominent advocacy opportunities for powerful young leaders affected and infected with HIV, such as the opening ceremony and plenary sessions at International AIDS Conferences. GYCA also connects young people to positions in their countries from which they can affect great change, such as employment with National AIDS Control

Organizations, heading NGOs and designing effective prevention and outreach programs.

Here, we can clearly see the impact that civic participation on the GYCA website will have on the issue of HIV/AIDS prevention and the inclusion of HIV/AIDS affected youth. Such clarity gives the participants a feeling of agency and motivates them to participate in the initiatives proposed by the website.

Not all civic websites provide this kind of concrete evidence. Most remain unclear about what happens after the voice is heard, and if the voices would ever reach the decision makers or policy developers. Most websites keep track of the number of members and visitors and it is easier for the campaign-based websites like Avaaz to keep a track of successes and failures in their campaigns, but there are only a few (like TIG and Soliya) who have undertaken systematic research on why and how the online civic participation matters and if their specific initiatives resulted in the outcome for which they were designed.

“The Preaching to the Choir” Effect

The civic websites often function like nurturing communication enclaves where most participants have the same interests and values. As a result, the same discourse gets circulated. Zhou (2008) notes in the impact study of TIG that there were a few examples of youth “who went through a complete transformation from apathy to activism through TIG. A large portion of survey and interview participants, however, were already engaged in their communities prior to joining TIG, and came to TIG to showcase their efforts or to get more involved” (p. 82).

One of the major argument against civic websites is that they don’t encourage participation from those who are not civically interested (Levine and Lopez, 2004; Zhou, 2008).

Livingstone (2009), for example, found that non-participation on civic websites is due to a general lack of interest more than specific problems like website design, trust, or searching skills. She also claims that “those who are interested will seek out these websites and those who are not, will not but that interacting with these sites is not itself a matter of political interest but rather of age and online expertise” (p.128). In a way, my study supports this argument because the majority of my interview participants claimed an already high level of civic interest before they became digitally active. My study, however, also shows that digital experience did encourage civic participation in some of my participants and shaped their civic interests. It is important to note, also, that civic participation online strengthened civic identities and global orientation in all my participants (see Chapter Five Part I for a detailed discussion of this effect).

DIY Versus Managed Online Civic Engagement

As we discussed earlier, a large number of online civic initiatives are youth oriented and this has sparked a debate about the relevance and effectiveness of managed civic engagement initiatives for youth. It is important to address this debate when we examine the role and efficacy of civic websites. The two most vocal critics of managed websites are Coleman (2008) and Harris (2004, 2008). Coleman argues that the managed websites treat young people as apprentice citizens and that youth who aspire to be autonomous e-citizens would resent the treatment as apprentice citizens. Harris (2008) argues: “There is also a gap between adult-centric notions of participation and good civic and political engagement, and the kind of participatory practices that young people and young women, in particular, create and value” (p. 484). Harris makes two points in support of her argument. One, young people’s civic activities with one another or outside the adult-sanctioned areas are not considered valuable and in fact, are sometimes seen as problematic. Youth participation is considered good only when it takes place through an adult-

driven preexisting program, forum, or initiative, in short a “managed” initiative. Two, the decision of many young people to not participate is regarded as apathy that needs to be cured through appealing civic initiatives, rather than a deliberate choice.

I have discussed earlier that recognizing the importance of voice in democratic participation, which many civic projects and websites have as their primary mission, provides an opportunity to those who normally do not get the opportunity to express their voices. Among the civic websites that I studied, several like UNICEF’s YouthVoice, the World Bank’s YouThink, and Y-Peer, mention this issue explicitly in their mission statements. These supposedly marginalized groups include young people, immigrants, and women, among others. Harris (2004), however, questions such initiatives with respect to young women. She asks if the moderators in managed projects really let young women express themselves in their authentic voice or if they have to bow to the pressure of talking about issues in a language that meets the sanction of the managers of the project, in our case civic websites. Harris also shows concern about the pressure these managed initiatives may place on young women to speak when they actually wish to remain silent, or to share their thoughts with audiences they may not want to reach. Harris’s observations explain why one of my participants, Gulab, who calls herself “anti-everything,” has found the DIY way of civic engagement through social media more satisfying than through participation on managed websites.

My examination of civic websites, however, indicates that managed websites have an important role to play in global civic engagement. First of all, the large number of people, young as well as older, who participate consistently on these websites indicates that even if their percentage is small, a considerable number of people find these websites an acceptable tool and a conducive space for civic engagement. Some of these managed websites have sustained

participation, developed a core leadership, and have grown over many years, which is itself an achievement when we observe that online organizations can as quickly fall apart as they can come together. There are several web-based communities among those I examined that have been consistently active for a long period of time -- for example, GYAN has been active for 20 years, UNOY Peacebuilders for 25 years, Peacejam 17 years, and TIG for more than 10 years. In fact, the resources, stable staff, and institutional networking that the managed websites achieve are not possible for DIY or spontaneous initiatives. It is also important to note that several of the large, especially youth-led, websites like TIG, YouthRise, the Harry Potter Alliance, and Peacejam emerged as spontaneous DIY initiatives, but once their scale grew and their scope became global, some form of management, moderation, and quality control became inevitable.

Jenkins has been an advocate of DIY civic engagement that is convergent with the popular participatory cultures and give several examples on the website of the participatory democracy project. My argument is that this phenomenon still has not been examined enough to promote it over the managed civic websites designed for civic participation. There is a need to ask more questions; for example, how global or sustained is the civic engagement through DIY sites and how many young people, especially young women, make a sustained use of the participatory popular cultures for citizenship practices? My examination of case studies on the participatory culture project website does not show participation from the global South or nations other than Euro-American ones. The Harry Potter Alliance is certainly a good example of a sustained, peer-driven community (though mostly American) with gradual global spread, but how many more such examples have we found, despite the claims made by Jenkins and the participatory democracy research group? Kony 2012, one of Jenkins et al.'s the participatory democracy cases, ran into serious problems, and the Indian case of the movie *Rang De Basanti*,

though having potential, has not sparked any serious community building around it. Thus, bottom-up sites may encourage more user-generated content, allow the participants to build their own civic agenda, challenge the prescribed notions of civic participation, and may exert no pressure to participate, while managed sites have more resources (money, time, technology) to both sustain participation and facilitate global networking, a stable core group of leaders with a long-term vision, and moderation to ward off incivility and disrespectful behavior that can put off participants, especially women. Besides, managed websites do not have to be completely top-down. If we take into consideration the critique of scholars like Coleman (2008), Harris (2008), and Livingstone (2009), we can be more vigilant in designing and managing civic websites that encourage democratic participation to the maximum extent possible. In fact, my interviews show that the social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, which were not designed as civic media, are rapidly being used in practices of civic engagement and can provide the DIY dimension that the civic websites lack. All my interview participants use these social media for civic purposes and they are an important part of their transcultural citizenship experience. The next section, therefore, examines how the increasing use of these social media as civic media is changing the role of civic websites.

Social Media as Civic Media

My data shows that although Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr were primarily designed as social networking platforms and not for the purpose of civic engagement in the way that civic websites have been designed; they are nonetheless becoming attractive options as civic media. My observations supports a review by Bennett et al. (2011) that concludes that “civic applications of social networking is especially pronounced among young adults... These civic uses include identifying friends’ political interests, receiving candidate information,

joining political groups and organizing offline political events” (p. 404). In my study, I found the older cohort of participants (those above 30) equally proficient in the civic uses of social media. Following the advice of Papacharissi (2010) to “advance beyond the political sphere to the social sphere” (p. 78), this chapter includes a brief analysis of the use of social media as civic media. In fact, Montgomery (2008) anticipated this trend when she observed that many of the civic websites have struggled for visibility and influence in a highly seductive and engaging online youth media environment comprised of YouTube, MySpace, and other such user-generated content sites. According to Montgomery, young people found many more opportunities in the emerging digital media culture that would fulfill their need to connect, engage, and create.

Which roles occupied by the civic websites are being taken over by social media and why? First of all, I found that my participants express much more on social media than they do on civic websites (they do use their own blogs for expression that could be hosted by civic websites), and a considerable portion of their expression is civic in nature. This may be because social media provides the much needed autonomy as well as the DIY component missing in the managed or top-down civic websites. My study also shows that with the web 2.0, the actual civic websites are becoming more like sources of information and places to find like-minded people, but dialogue and sharing happen through social media. Most of my participants subscribe to RSS feeds and regularly receive phone, Twitter, or Facebook updates from the selected civic websites instead of visiting the websites daily. During my study, I tried contacting some of my participants through their profile pages on sites like TIG or PCDN but was not successful in getting a response as they did not visit their profile pages regularly. In contrast, sending a message through Facebook got me instant responses from several participants. Papacharissi (2010) suggests that in the new converged environment, the exchange of opinion becomes more

important than the much celebrated consensus. Social media platforms, with their quick publishing features and lack of gatekeeping, could become the ideal tools for expressing opinions. My study also shows that social media can be a better tool for converting new members to one's ideology or cause because on the civic websites, a user is more likely to be preaching to the choir.

It is also true that in our day-to-day life, the civic and political do not always exist in separate and compartmentalized time and space, and social media resonate with this reality. There is a conflation of the public, social, and private as well as of global and local identities on social media, and civic and political matters get discussed with all the other things in life. For example, it is not uncommon for my participants to be doing all of the following from their own bedroom at the same time: read a friend's blog about her adventures in Peru, sign a petition to end global rape culture, send out event invites for the next LGBTQ poetry slam, scan and share the pictures from last night's birthday bash, pledge money to a political campaign, and make a mental note of a movie she should catch. And all this with her favorite artist playing in the background.

Weinstein (2014), in her research on civic expression on social networking sites, finds that most of the youth she interviewed found empowering opportunities for civic expression, participation, and impression management on these sites. A subset of youth, however, avoided civic expression online. She argues that this is a conscious civic decision and could be for a number of reasons varying from social considerations, privacy issues, or the risk and implications of "digital afterlife" (Soep, 2012). My study makes similar observations. Some my participants explicitly mentioned "holding back" strong opinions related to gender and consciously alternated their civic postings with those depicting humor or those of a personal and

social nature in order to “not appear like a crazy feminist.” They also worried about appearing “too political.” Because of the wider and ideologically diverse audience, they experienced ridicule, hostile backlash, and incivility at a much higher rate on social media than on civic websites.

My study also shows that most networks on social media are ideologically diverse but geographically situated in limited parts of the world. Networks on global civic websites, on the contrary, are ideologically homogenous but geographically and culturally heterogeneous. Both of these networks can make different types of contributions to civic engagement, one by a wider ideological exposure and the other by a wider cultural exposure, and both of these types of exposure can encourage critical thinking, which is an important attribute of a transcultural citizen.

Conclusion

The Internet provides several different kinds of spaces with the potential for civic engagement. This chapter focuses on the global/transnational civic websites that are specifically designed to address civic issues of global relevance and attract global participation. It also briefly demonstrates the increasing relevance of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr to civic engagement.

An examination of the global civic websites shows that several such websites use the various affordances of the Internet to facilitate transcultural citizenship -- a type of citizenship that is experienced culturally rather than through legal-political governance and enacted by individuals who communicate across cultures but who are rooted in local cultures that themselves show transculturality (for more on this concept, see Chapter Three).

The managed and acontextual nature of civic participation experienced on such sites has

sparked criticism about the efficacy of such participation and also about the lack of citizen autonomy. My in-depth examination of 28 global websites and a review of 25 more such sites indicates that despite these limitations and despite social media taking over some of the original role and functions of the civic websites, these websites provide important options (not as a substitute but as a supplement) for civic participation, especially transcultural civic participation. Dahlgren and Olsson's (2008) study of civically active youth shows that "the use of the Internet facilitated their existing activities but could not replace the importance of face to face interaction, for sustaining motivation, deepening bonds and aiding decision making....For the already committed, specific affordances of the Internet may enhance their activities" (p.131). My study notes that there are some predominantly online networks, but as far as ego-centric networks are concerned, my participants reported a two-way flow between online and offline networks. Women's online networks are often based on offline connections and they are also used to find offline connections and strengthen offline networks. Conversely, several online connections have their beginnings in initial offline meetings and then they are sustained via online communication. Andrea, for example, frequently attends international conferences and youth meetings. She says that "...meeting these people from different parts of the world who are thinking the same as you are, who want to do something with their life, who have dedicate their life for good cause...that was very very important for me because I felt I was a part of a community." This community is then strengthened online through communication, sharing, and support. Thus, the boundaries between offline-online networks are porous.

Designing and sustaining websites that use the affordances of the Internet and refrain from top-down control of civic participation have the potential to facilitate global connections, help build transnational networks and coalitions, and nurture dialogue and a sense of solidarity

with fellow humans. They can also make possible a larger reach of local civic work, creating global resonance for local issues. Finally, by providing opportunities for exposure and understanding of other cultures, they can encourage critical thinking about local/national cultures and practices. When civic websites use the communication affordances of the Internet fully, they open the doors for participants to connect and engage in conversations with those who are not available to them in offline contexts. This is, in my opinion, the most important contribution of the global civic websites to transcultural citizenship.

I call online action invisible and fragmented citizenship because much of what happens online is not visible, at least immediately. People read (information and opinions), make mental notes, introspect, build, or change opinions (covert action), and feel a sense of agency, but much of this happens privately. All these activities are important for citizenship if we are willing to consider citizenship as a state of mind, an integral part of one's identity and not just a list of pre-sanctioned and overt actions.

Montgomery observed back in 2008 that the increasing pressure for commercial control of the Internet will negatively impact its use of democratic civic participation because it will be beyond the reach of the marginalized groups who really benefit from online participation. Also, if we fail to bridge the digital inequalities in the world and ignore to develop the skills of public communication and civil expression of opinion, the affordances of the Internet will fail to provide any concrete benefits for global civic engagement. In the next three chapters I examine how my 23 interview participants from 15 different countries use civic websites and social media to practice and experience transcultural citizenship. The value these women ascribe to the Internet in shaping and sustaining their global civic participation reiterates the importance of a proactive approach to net neutrality and digital inclusion.

CHAPTER 5: DOING TRANSCULTURAL CITIZENSHIP ONLINE—CONSTITUTIVE DIMENSIONS

Chapter Three shows us that the women in my study define citizenship in relational, affective, and discursive terms -- albeit with the possibility for embodied and material social change. Most of my subjects self-identify as global citizens and ascribe to the Internet a significant role in their experience of transcultural citizenship. Chapter Four gives an overview of what kind of civic opportunities the Internet offers and how different civic communities use the affordances of the Internet for women to practice transcultural citizenship. Chapters Three and Four also show how due to social changes in late modernity and the affordances of the Internet a global civic subculture of transcultural citizenship is gradually emerging. It is noteworthy that while my participants are from vastly different geo-political and cultural locations their discourse on global citizenship reveals a set of shared identity affinities, core values, approaches to citizenship, and new media practices. This fact has led me to the argument that, despite being in a nascent stage, a globally existing civic subculture that I call “transcultural citizenship” is emerging and that the women in my study are representatives of this global phenomenon. The Internet plays a valuable role in shaping this subculture. The present chapter is the first in the series of three chapters that examines this new global civic subculture and focuses on the “how” aspect of women’s online engagement and their experience of transcultural citizenship.

Study Participants: Cases of Positive Deviance

I have earlier argued that transcultural citizenship is a civic subculture because its norms and practices are at variance with the dominant civic culture that highly values national citizenship and identities. It is natural for scholars to ask who constitutes this subculture. Though

my study is focused on those who self-identify as women, there are certainly other genders who are members of this subculture and we need to study their participation as well. I am focusing on women in my study who I treat as the cases of positive deviance (See Chapter One and Two for definition of positive deviance and discussion on my participants as the cases of positive deviance). These women are civically active, digitally fluent, and have a global orientation.

To a certain extent, my participants represent a certain type of privileged user: they are college educated, speak English, and have digital access. Bennett et al. (2010) argues that online participatory culture that has come under scrutiny by a number of scholars recently has its limits: “Despite the dramatic rise in use of these new forms of media the potential of mediated civic participatory culture is neither fully realized or evenly distributed” (p.406). Bennett et al. observe that participatory skills are too often limited to the empowered and self-selected elite. A minority of participants produces the vast majority of contributions and receive correspondingly disproportionate attention. My own observations of civic websites show this claim to be true, and I also admit that most of my participants belong to this small group of so-called privileged women. I would hesitate to call them elite though. Most of my participants are from middle class or upper middle class backgrounds and some also from the working class. Several women started on an old or a borrowed computer and some in Africa and Asia are still concerned about the Internet costs. Some of the young women who have just finished college are earning a living wage. Some in the global South may have more access to education and digital media compared to others in their own countries but not if we compare them to some others in the global North.

Shirky (2008) explains this phenomenon with the help of the power law distribution. He gives several examples, such as Flickr photo sharing communities and Wikipedia, to argue that on the Internet a handful of people make most of the contributions; he also argues that there is a

large mass of people who make very small contributions. In this sense, studying the “average” Internet contributor does not accurately explain online Net-based participation. If we want to study any online culture, the contributions made by the small number of highly active people is important to examine and this applies to the online global civic culture too.

My informal survey posted on civic websites (and from there shared on social media) got 136 responses from 42 countries (see Chapter Two on methodology for more details about the survey). Their ages ranged from 18-52 with 56% between 22 and 30; 76% of these women had college educations, and the urban:rural distribution was approximately 80:20. Most of these women were also not full-time activists, though many worked in professions that reflected their civic interests, which included a wide variety of issues related to women’s rights, world peace, climate change, and animal rights.

For an in-depth analysis of my participants’ online and transcultural civic participation, I use the framework of online transcultural citizenship (as discussed in detail in Chapter Two).

The analysis is divided into three chapters This chapter examines identities/affinities and values and the way that these two dimensions play an important role in shaping the predisposition of women like my participants to being a part of the global civic web-sphere. We should, however, remember that these dimensions are also shaped and reshaped in the process of civic participation. Chapter Six examines the next four dimensions- information, connection, expression, and dialogue- which are all associated with communicative action, and highlights the processes and practices associated with the ways that the Internet facilitates transcultural citizenship. Finally, Chapter Seven analyzes the efficacy of online action and the resulting sense of civic agency, and concludes the examination of transcultural citizenship as manifested through my participants’ online engagement. Of course, these dimensions are not always easily separable

and again, as my analysis shows, they mostly operate intersectionally. For example, identities and values are very closely related and are often manifested conjointly in the selection of civic communities and online expression. Information sharing has always been an important part of online expression, dialogue, and action (with “action” being defined in several different ways and wherein symbolic expression features as a way of taking action online). My analysis in these chapters is aimed at examining how each dimension in the framework, at times individually and at other times in intersection with others, is connected to the affective, relational, and discursive approaches that characterize transcultural citizenship, and how each shapes, reinforces, or problematizes my participants’ civic identities.

Based on the in-depth interviews and textual analysis of their online civic participation, I categorize my 23 participants in the following three ideal types: one, those “leaders and mobilizers” in leadership roles in local/national organizations or movements, who have a calling to work for a particular issue, target politicians and policy makers along with peers in their online expression, and have strong offline as well as online networks; two “intercultural connectors, critical communicators, and peace builders,” who have superior communication skills and are interested in peace building, conflict resolution, and cross-border dialogue, and write on a range of issues like gender, climate change, immigration, and culture (most of them write about their own countries, communities, and cultures as well as on various international issues, and critique the nation-state as the central concept in defining citizenship); and three, “information and personal fulfillment seekers,” who primarily use the Internet to receive information from a variety of sources, write mostly for their friends and peer group, and experience some kind of limitations at this stage in terms of being fully active global citizens. They love to make international friends but see themselves as representatives of their cultures

and nations.

These categories show that even though my participants share enough core values and beliefs to merit the term “sub-culture” for their online civic culture, there are different ways of experiencing the subculture of transcultural citizenship. These differences should be taken into account in any assessment of this subculture, as well as in designing online spaces for civic engagement. The detailed analysis of the seven dimensions of online transcultural citizenship follows.

Becoming Digital, Civic and Global

I have mentioned earlier that my participants share three common characteristics: they are civically active, digitally fluent, and globally oriented. I discuss the development of their civic and global orientation under the two dimensions of the online transcultural citizenship framework -- “values” and “identities” -- later in this chapter, but it is also important to examine how they became digitally fluent considering that women have conventionally been associated with low access to, low interest in, and low use of new media technologies¹ Examining these women’s pathways to becoming digitally active shows us the intersections of different personal and lifeworld factors that create these cases of positive deviance with respect to gender and technology use. The following section examines the pathways that these different women in different locations took towards acquiring digital fluency.

Becoming Digital

Thirty-eight percent of the women who answered my survey had been active in online civic communities for more than four years, while 30% have been for two to four years, which shows that for most of the women who participated in the survey, their presence in a global

¹ There are some exceptions here such as there are many more women bloggers than men. Gender gap is also closing in countries like the US but taking a global view gender still has negative implications for technology access and use).

online civic community was not an arbitrary or one-time action.

During the interviews, all of the participants claimed a high level of online activities and presence. There is, however, a difference in the current patterns of digital media use between the younger and the older cohorts. While the older participants like Ginger, Valerie, Shahla, Graciela, and Katerina predominantly use the Internet for civic and professional purposes, the younger cohort uses it extensively for social and entertainment purposes alongside the civic. Both younger and older cohorts, however, claim that they are much more technologically savvy and more civically minded Internet users as compared to their family members and peers. For the younger cohort, their online civic interests set them apart from their peers. As Cristina, Mayang, and Laura point out, their friends mostly use the Internet for entertainment, life-style information, socializing, and shopping. For the older cohort, their interest in civic matters as well as their higher level of digital competency set them apart from other women of their generation. Kateriana, for example, started working with computers in the mid 1980s, when many of her generation in Kazakhstan had only read about computers in science fiction books. Graciela, an Internet governance expert and a publisher from Brazil has a presence on several digital platforms and is very knowledgeable about Internet governance issues. She says,

I think the knowledge I have about the Internet... I know the structure, how the politics behind it works, what interests are at stake...so I am not a user as most women in my generation...the kind of things they share is completely different than me because I use this space only for sharing something that I believe in, for advocating for causes that I support, announcing things that is important to have the visibility (...).

The process of acquiring digital fluency and the levels of present digital engagement as

described by the study participants show the influence of factors like age, gender, geo-political location, and profession. Although most of the participants still recall their first encounter with the Internet as “awe inspiring” and “fascinating,” I have observed two different pathways that are dependent on the younger and the older cohorts in my study -- the former being the so-called digital natives who grew up with new media technologies, and the latter the digital immigrants who were exposed to new media technologies as adults. The natives like Andrea, Febi, Laura, Yohana, Mayang, Sania, Gulab, Helen and Saumya (all younger than 30, with most in their early twenties) started using the computer and the Internet as adolescents, were introduced to the computer and the Internet through leisure and entertainment activities, and quickly caught up with the civic web-sphere because of their civic interests. Laura in Venezuela and Febi in Indonesia remember the addictive pull of the Internet when they were in middle or high school -- it made them spend all their free time and all of their pocket money in cyber cafes. These young women started using the Internet like any other young person, drawn to chat groups and games, but their civic, literary, and artistic interests and their curiosity about the world at large soon took them to other websites. Gulab, a DIY activist for immigrant rights recalls being obsessed with social justice issues at a very young age. She says, “When I was eight year old and visiting websites it was about issues. I think that time it was the war in Kuwait... that or environmental justice talk...that’s what I would use the Internet for.” She also found art and music with political messages on the Internet and became a big consumer of those media. Recalling her early digital experience, Andrea, a journalist and a blogger from Mexico says, “I started writing an online blog in school, when I was 17 or 18. I was interested in issues, just writing about them. I became a blogger without knowing what is blogging pretty early. That first blog led to several civic connections and international opportunities.” Today, Andrea is a prolific blogger with a

substantial following who writes on climate change, Mexico, and travel among other topics.

All the women in this under-30 age group should not all be labeled as “digital natives.” For women in the same age group growing up in countries like Nepal, Romania, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, the Internet became accessible much later. For young women in these countries, their computer use started in college and even then access to the Internet was a privilege. My argument is that in cross-national comparative work digital “nativity” is not simply a function of age but of cycles of technological development.

For some in the older cohort -- specifically, Ginger, Valerie, and Shahla -- it was their work and civic activities as adults that demanded digital fluency, and despite the steep learning curve, they met the demands of technology. Valerie, advocacy coordinator and policy analyst for the National Association of Mothers’ Centers, says, “I had to learn all of these [skills like blogging, social media] as an adult... after my head was already wired. I depend upon younger people, my employer, or friends to help me.” Considering her late start, Valerie’s online presence is impressive. She is not only on social media like Facebook and Twitter, she also has her own award-winning blog, *Your (Wo)man in Washington*, a well-recognized and highly respected one. Katerina became proficient in computer technology through formal college courses but Graciela proudly shares how she is a self-taught technology user: “In four years I went from discovering the Internet to becoming a complete producer.”

Their sense of difference and isolation also drew some of the participants to spend more time on the Internet. For example, Gulab believes that her family and social situation might be the reason why she was so drawn to the Internet at an early age: “I was drawn to [the] Internet, [I] like to talk to people... it was a space for myself that no one actually owned, [the] Internet was my recourse.” Sania gives a similar account of her growing up in suburban Chicago as a

minority: “I had no one to talk to in the suburb, total disconnect[ed]. That is why I am active online. I am on Twitter with like-minded people. My environment prompted me to become active online.” Shahla, one of the older participants and a university teacher from Pakistan, also mentions her limited social life because of her different interests and disposition, and considers that an important factor in why she spends most of her free time on the Internet. Once these women started spending more and more time on the Internet, their already developed civic interests led them to civically-minded communities. These communities, in turn, shaped their online participation.

Although gender has been identified in research reports and scholarly literature as a factor that influences access to and use of digital technologies, none of my participants felt their gender was a barrier in accessing technology or that there was any gender discrimination in their families with respect to the availability of technology. My participants also called themselves exceptionally lucky in that sense because they routinely witnessed gender barriers in technology use in their communities and countries. The demands of marriage and motherhood, however, greatly and negatively influence the time and money that the women have to spend on digital technologies, as pointed out by Raji and Ginger; this is true in a variety of locations, from Nepal to the United States.

National policies and infrastructure are both important in shaping digital practices because they can facilitate as well as constrain individual participation. The policies and infrastructure determine access to media, tariffs, freedom of expression, and gatekeeping to outside information. Countries like Nepal, Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan, and Djibouti still have infrastructural limitations on Internet access that affect the digital practices of participants from these countries. My participants’ middle-class backgrounds, levels of higher

education, and communication competencies, however, help them to be active users of digital media within these infrastructural limitations. Most of my participants have middle-class to upper middle-class backgrounds, so that when their countries opened up to computers and later to the Internet, most did not have serious financial limitations in terms of gaining access to them. Still, several of my participants recall working initially on a borrowed or a used computer and the family making other sacrifices in order to have the computer, which was thought to be important in keeping up with the times.

Although all of my participants are technologically proficient in using the Internet and production, they all see the Internet as a “tool,” something to facilitate the activities they care about. All of the participants, however, claim that though only a tool, the Internet has become very important in their civic participation, especially their transnational civic participation. Though most participants (except Yohana and Laura) developed their civic interests before getting exposed to the Internet they claim that, once exposed to the civic webosphere, the Internet played an important role in shaping their civic interests and participation.

Now I begin the analysis of how my participants experience transcultural citizenship online using the seven dimensions of the framework discussed earlier. These seven dimensions are

1. Identities/Affinities
2. Values
3. Knowledge/Information
4. Connection/Communities/Networks
5. Expression/Voice
6. Dialogue/Deliberation

7. Action (includes also a sense of efficacy)

1. Identity

Identity is one of the two (along with values) dimensions of my transcultural citizenship framework that predominantly shape initial civic agency. In this section, I show how various axes of identity are foregrounded to shape transcultural civic participation of the women in my study and how online civic participation, in turn, helps to shape new identities.

Dahlgren (2000, p.338) recognizes the individual component in civic identity, i.e., “how one sees oneself as a citizen”, as important in civic participation. Civic participation, however, requires both a strong sense of self as a civic agent and also the ability to forge multiple identifications with others. Buckingham (2008) explains how identity, from the Latin root *idem*, meaning “the same,” also implies differences. “Our identity is something we uniquely possess; it distinguishes us from other people. On the other hand, identity also implies a relationship with a broader collective or social group; for example, in the case of national identity, cultural identity, or gender identity” (p.1).

Self-Identifying as “Different”

My participants vary hugely on the various factors that shape one’s identity, such as disposition, family, community, education, class, geo-political and cultural location, media, and significant micro and macro life events. It’s interesting, therefore, to observe that despite coming from these varied locations, most of my participants self-identify as “different.” These women express a sense of difference in relation to both their peer groups and their families -- a difference that they consider to be unique and inherent to them as individuals and is not a result of their upbringing. Olfa, from Tunisia who is a youth coordinator with UNFPA in Djibouti, has made different life choices as compared to her high school friends and sees herself as different

from her peer group in several ways. She explains how, “[w]hile [her] friends used to go out, to dance, to watch TV,” Olfa herself was “in trainings, conferences, fieldwork, raising awareness of young people, doing advocacy.” As a result, she says, others saw her as “very courageous and ambitious.” Olfa’s experience reflects that of several other participants. Yohana, for example, who also describes her difference as something inherent says, it is “the way I am” or simply “something you are born with.” Some women, for example Graciela and Gwenn, point out that their children or siblings never experienced this civic passion or critical worldview despite coming from the same family and experiencing similar early life experiences or child raising practices. However, difference can also be greeted negatively. Shahla gives several examples, starting at age five, when she has taken a firm stand against her family, community, and social norms and has felt isolated because of that. She admits, “Yes, I am different in my family. I do not know why I am like that. Most of the time in my life I have resisted on the issues that I considered wrong and I did not accept them.”

This sense of difference growing up has mostly been preserved for the majority of my participants into their adult lives. It has and continues to sometimes cause conflict with their families or current peer groups, especially with friends from high school or college who have followed a different life trajectory. In general, this sense of difference commonly manifests in four distinct traits: a heightened sense of empathy for others, a strong interest in social justice issues, a critical and questioning nature, and a willingness to act on one’s passion even at the risk of being isolated. My participants see themselves as “caring for,” “supportive of,” and “having a heart to help” fellow human beings without discrimination. Others’ misfortune, whether those in geographic proximity or those encountered through the media, arouse their empathy and move them to action when it is possible. For most, their critical and questioning attitude was also

evident from early childhood. Growing up, they questioned their parents, families, religious authorities and teachers. Gulab, for example, recalls the painful memories of being bullied by teachers and students alike for asking questions. Later, this critical attitude led my participants to question the conventional notion of a citizenship based solely on national identity.

One of the areas where their critical attitude is manifested the strongest is in the case of gender norms and expectations. Several of my participants question gender stereotypes and even when they self-identify as women their gender identities do not reflect the normative expectations of their societies, which significantly contributes to their sense of difference. Talking about gender norms in Romania, Cristina, a doctoral student and a feminist activist argues, “I am not denying my femininity...in Romania only the women who get very rich men or men in high position are the women presented on the media so I am refusing this stereotype...I want to be myself...I don’t want to be a lady.” Similarly, Katerina’s lifestyle clashes with the Kazakh expectations to “get married whatever it would cost, or, at least, to give birth to at least one child” as the only possible ways for a woman to realize her potential. “I believe everyone has a right for her/his own, unique way of living except for living which is damaging lives of other people,” says Katerina, an international expert on combating human trafficking. Most of my participants consider gender-based discrimination also as a social justice issue along with other issues like sexuality, animal rights, climate change, and health. Their interest in social justice is also reflected in the way these women engage with the media. Most of my participants pointed out that while their peers have been more interested in following the latest gossip, fashion, celebrities, or consumer trends, they follow current affairs, global issues, and topics relating to social justice.²

² It should be, however, noted that not all the women were necessarily isolated in all

The sense of difference is two-fold for women who are bi-cultural. For one, like other participants, their civic interest sets them apart from their peers and two, their marginal identities enhance this sense of difference. The racism and exclusion experienced because of being “brown” or “Moslem” or “Hindu” in a predominantly white and Christian culture has left painful scars on participants like Sania (Moslem, Pakistan) , Aya (Moslem, Morocco), and Gulab (Hindu, India). These marginalized identities have also fueled their critical perspectives and civic participation. Gulab, and similarly Aya and Sania, have channeled these experiences of alienation into civic work that focuses on intercultural understanding, as well as social justice for immigrants. The sense of isolation that arises from having a different sense of self is instrumental in pushing some of these women to look for identification with others online. Ginger, Gulab, Sania, and Laura are some examples where their critical nature and civic interests found a better response online than in their geographic communities. Especially for Gulab, who calls herself “anti-everything,” joining an established civic engagement organization would have been problematic, so for her the DIY citizenship opportunities and the possibility of forming ego-centric networks on platforms like Twitter and Tumblr are very valuable.

Identity as the Foundation of Civic Connection

In conventional models of citizenship, national and ethnic/religious identities play a

spheres growing up. Most had some interests and activities that they pursued with their peers. For example, Cristina went out dancing a lot and organized all the high school social events. Sania remembers having fun with cousins. Helen, Mayang, and Febi have a large circle of friends with whom they enjoy leisure activities, while Aya found a supportive group of African-American friends and was an active tap-dancer.

major role in determining if an individual is worthy of citizenship. My participants reject this notion and claim that the most important identity they have is that of a human being and that is the only identity they consider when offering empathy and solidarity to fellow humans. For example, Gwenn claims, "...I would identify myself as a humanitarian rather than a feminist. You are first human before being a man or a woman." Gulab goes a step further to reject the concept of identity and sees values as a more reliable way to describe a person's identity than nationality or ethnicity. She says, "...I don't identify as American, I also don't really identify as Indian, they are just words, these are just markers of country that I arrived from. ..I identify myself as a mystic, as a poet, as a comedienne, as an artist (...)."

In practice, however, identification with others is a more complex process. First of all, our identities are intersectional. Intersectionality is a concept that rejects the single-axis frameworks of social identities and calls for attention to the constitutive relations among multiple axes of social identities. Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) is credited with introducing the term intersectionality in her analysis of the unique disadvantages that black women suffered from when separate analytical categories of gender and race were deployed to define the experience of oppression. Crenshaw's emphasis was on the "interaction" of multiple dimensions in constituting marginalization.

It merits attention that when my participants speak about themselves, they clearly speak from multiple identity locations. For example, Laura says, "I am a lot of things, not just Venezuelan, not just a woman, not just a doctoral student." Saumya describes herself as a "twenty-year old Indian woman, having this cultural dichotomy of growing up in Los Angeles and now living in Bueno Aires in Argentina, who feels strongly about gender and social justice (...)." Sania shows how being a woman of color, a racial minority, a Moslem, and a woman of

Pakistani origin intersects to shape her civic interests, which vary from gender relations in Moslem societies to immigrant rights in the U.S. to drone attacks on Pakistan. Nadia attributes her civic interest and citizenship practices to the intersection of different identity axes and life experiences like “being binational (French-Moroccan), being a woman, growing up in a very difficult family, violent family history (...).” These intersections have made her interested in conflict resolution, cross-cultural understanding, women’s empowerment, and using information and media for peace. Nadia also argues that different axes of her identity have been more significant than others in different stages of life. Similarly, Olfa recognizes that her youth, gender, and nationality intersect to shape her global civic participation through influencing her political interests and missions, determining the opportunities available, and charting her civic and professional paths.

Another dimension of intersectionality is manifested in the interaction of personal, professional, social, and civic/public identities in the citizenship practices of my participants. For example, when I ask Ginger if she considers her online engagement as a physical therapist citizenship, she says, “... a lot of what I do is *Karmayoga* or service yoga because I am not getting paid...I guess you can say that [this is a part of citizenship] because I consider it my professional responsibility to inform people about what is going on about mothers’ rights(...).” Ginger’s involvement with mothers’ rights and maternal health advocacy was put in motion by her own personal experience of professional isolation after becoming a mother, and she uses her professional expertise to make life better for other mothers. Valerie and Nadia express similar sentiments about the ways that their personal, social, professional, and civic identities work in unison to shape their civic participation.

When it comes to making decisions about identifying with others in order to form groups,

coalitions, or civic communities, however, my participants foreground one or more axes of their intersectional identities. Even when my participants claim that they recognize everyone else as just another human, the real world is full of conflicting ideologies and practices. When one is actively advocating for or against an issue forming coalitions and identifying the opposition is a natural process. From several different identity axes that intersect to shape an individual, three axes in particular -- gender, youth, and immigrant/bi-cultural identities -- are the ones my participants foreground as the basis for forming affinities with others.³ We can argue that these identities are hegemonically constructed and are rooted in essentialism, but we have to take a note that several global civic networks are based on these three identities. These identity axes facilitate connecting and bonding of a transnational nature. In online contexts, these identity axes influence my participants'

- choice of networks and online connections,
- choice of websites as communities/spaces of civic participation, and
- choice of issues for advocacy or opposition.

³:Only Gulab explicitly mentions class and caste as a defining identity axis. She says, "I think that my experience growing up in America is very common to a lot of people... like I didn't grow up super super rich, so many of us Punjabi, Gujaratis have agricultural backgrounds like my family, parents have ordinary jobs, misogynist families...a lot of people have told me that they have never heard anybody talking as truthfully about where you are from, people try to hide it." According to Gulab, class as an identity axis influenced her experience of exclusion in the US. On the other hand, coming from a so called "upper caste" family in India, she also observed how her family was dismissive of those from the lower castes. These combined to shape her interest in social justice as a global issue.

In the following sections I discuss how the three identity axes influence women's choice of networks, websites, and issues.

Gender. Gender as an identity axis arouses strong affinities and coalitions, and influences the choice of networks. A large number of my participants care about gender issues. Nadia a French-Moroccan journalist based in Morocco, for example, is an advocate for gender equality and emphatically says, “ I am a woman first before everything else. Probably because I live in a country where gender divides so much. This is the thing that affects me the most...people define you by your gender...before anything else.” Similarly, fed up with constantly circulating clichés about Brazilian women in the global media, Yohana joined a group of feminist bloggers in Brazil even when she had personally not faced any massive gender discrimination. Once she became part of the blogger community her networks expanded and she started taking a deeper interest in gender issues. Raji's interest in women's empowerment and her participation in websites like Girls Help Girls also stem from her personal experiences, particularly exposure to gender discrimination in Nepal.

Being a mother is also a gender-based identity that inspires strong affinities. My observations show that women transcend other identity axes like nationality or ethnicity in favor of bonding over the experience of motherhood. This is evident online in the form of numerous mom blogs with global readership, mom websites, global mom networks, and online magazines for mothers. In the cases of Ginger and Valerie, it was motherhood and the investment in their own identity as mothers that not only made them recognize and publicize discrimination faced by women, especially mothers, but also shaped their local and global digital networks and civic work. Valerie, for example, as an American “educated white woman” with a law degree, never expected gender based discrimination to affect her career -- but motherhood changed that

perception. Motherhood also brought a change in her career from an attorney to a policy analyst and an online advocate for the rights of mothers and caregivers. Ginger and Valerie claim that they feel an affinity with other mothers globally, and this is evident in a range of women's issues in different countries they show support for through fundraising, donating, signing petitions, and publicizing.

Sexuality is also at the foundation of civic movements and organizations that women start or join. Florence's civic work, for example, emerged from both her LGBTQ identity and her feminism, and grew stronger through her desire to see young women take the lead in the Feminist Movement in Namibia. Now Florence is in a leadership role in Y-Fem, an organization that she founded in order to advocate for LGBT and gender rights across Africa.

Youth. Youth identity is another dominant axis of identity that inspires global affinities. Youth is seen as empowering for some of the young women in the study, while it is also seen as limiting in others. In conversations with me, the younger women in my study, Andrea, Olfa, Florence, Febi, Saumya, and Mayang all spoke about various opportunities for networking and civic participation that have been available to them because they are "youth" (under 21). Olfa, for example, speaks from a strong youth identity that intersects with her gender identity. Her identity as a socially engaged young woman has influenced her opportunities for global civic participation through conferences, training programs, and volunteer opportunities. Her youth identity is also visible in her choice of online platforms for civic participation, which are mostly youth-led organizations doing social and humanitarian work; for example, Y-PEER: Youth Peer Education Network, GYCA: Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Youth-Rise, and TakingITGlobal. Olfa's voluntary civic participation with Tunisian youth organizations later led to more international involvement and now her current position in the development sector in

Djibouti. Similarly, as a young journalist and climate change blogger, Andrea travels the world, while Saumya applies for international internships and study abroad programs.

If we survey the global civic web-sphere (see Chapter Four for details), it becomes apparent that a large number of civic websites are either youth-led or target youth (TIG, UNOY Peacebuilders, UNICEF Voices of Youth World Bank YouThink, ListenUp among others). Preparing young people as the “future” citizens of the world, giving them opportunities to express their voices, and facilitating connection with other young people are the main missions fuelling these youth oriented organizations. Youth, however, also brings limitations to civic participation. Mayang, Saumya, and Helen have spoken at length about the limitations of their young age with respect to civic participation. A lack of confidence in their knowledge about global issues, financial dependence, restrictions on mobility, and limited opportunities for making a global impact are some of the limitations they mention.

Bi-cultural/immigrant identity. A considerable proportion of my sample (almost 25%) say their values and civic participation has been shaped by their binational/bicultural/multicultural identities, some of which are also immigrant identities. Gulab says, “ My *desi* identity is very important to me, it’s very political, it’s not like OMG, I want to got to *Garba*... it is beyond *Garba*, it’s all encompassing (...).”⁴

Researchers like Martinez-Lopez et al. (2011), Pieterse (2007), and Tonn and Ogle (2002) have suggested the emergence of global multiculturalism as a result of interactions among individuals of different cultures. In some ways, as Arnett (2000) argues, most young people growing up in this rapidly globalizing world would have some sort of bi-cultural or transcultural identity. As a vast number of local spaces are now transcultural, young people grow up with one

⁴ *Desi* is the term used for a South Asian in North America, especially the U.S. *Garba* is a popular folk dance form from Gujarat, India, from where Gulab’s family originates.

part rooted in the local culture and the other opened up to absorb all sorts of global influences. Rola, a product of Lebanese roots and Canadian residence, reflects Arnett's view when she questions if even people with a single nationality can have a "pure" identity because all identities are hybrid. "What is 'pure' Lebanese?," she asks. I am using the term "bi-cultural" here with a stricter meaning than Rola's interpretation suggests. The women who I identify as having a bi-cultural or multi-cultural identity have either parents from vastly different cultures or countries, or their countries of origin and residence are different. Aya, Gulab, Sania, Rola, Graciela Katerina, Saumya, and Nadia fall into this group.

My participants have their individual ways to negotiate bi-cultural identities. Some feel alienation from some aspects of both the cultures, as Gulab and Sania demonstrate. Then there are some, like Nadia, Rola, and Graciela, who identify with different aspects of their mixed cultural heritage to create a blended identity. And then there are some like Aya and Saumya who see more of one culture (Moroccan./Arab in the case of Aya and Indian in the case of Saumya) reflected in their identities than the other (American).

Aya explains her leaning towards her Arab-Moroccan side of identity by pointing out her treatment as an outsider in the US: "Personally, I feel half American, half Moroccan. My mom is Christian and my dad is Moslem. I am Moslem. But I feel that my Arab side, my Moroccan side...is stronger, may be because of my experience in the United States... I always have to explain where I am from." Aya feels a little alienated from American society because of this treatment. She compares this to how she is treated in Morocco: "I personally feel very much a part of the U.S., it's just that at the same time I feel that others don't feel like I am a full part of it... In Morocco it is completely the opposite. It is like, 'I don't care where you lived your whole life and even if you never came back you are Moroccan and don't forget that you are Moroccan.'"

Thus, though Aya lives and works in the U.S. she feels closer to her Moroccan identity and says it helps her as a volunteer in facilitating dialogues between American White women and Arab Moslem women.

There are two other axes of identity that influence civic participation though my participants directly do not acknowledge them as strong factors in their citizenship experience: Religion and geo-political location. Geo-political and ethnic identities also influence women's civic missions and their roles in online communities even when they self-identify as global citizens and do not use these identities as the primary bases for forming civic networks online. For example, Andrea says, "I prefer global first, then Latin American, and then local." And yet, challenging Eurocentrism in the news, putting Latin America on the world platform, and restoring the balance of global information are all factors clearly driving her civic expression. Similarly, Laura is influenced by her feeling that Venezuela is not justly represented on the global stage: "There is so much to Venezuela but people only wrote about Chavez this and Chavez that." Laura writes on Global Voices Online about various aspects of Venezuela and yet claims, "I am happy to be Venezuelan but not only that." Florence, claims a strong global civic identity but shows an affinity to her Damarras tribe in Namibia: "My ethnic group is quite matriarchal compared to a majority of ethnic groups that are patriarchal, where culture is so deeply rooted that women can't express themselves as some of us can." Florence feels that her ethnic background made it easy for her to step into the leadership role in Y-Fem and also to raise her voice online. Ginger points to her Native American Cherokee heritage as a driving force in her environmental activism because it values "the full circle philosophy (...)."

Geo-political and ethnic identities also raise the issue of recognition because identity is not only about how individuals see themselves, but also about how they are seen by others. The

labels that others ascribe to a person can have an impact on civic participation online as well as offline. Shahla, for example, has experienced that her identity as an educated, feminist, outspoken woman has exclusionary effect on her public participation in Pakistan. Mayang, a young Indonesian student and volunteer says that she has not faced any barriers in online global civic participation as a woman, “but as an Indonesian, maybe yes.” When she participates in global youth events, she feels inadequate in her ability to compete, to discuss issues knowledgeably, and about the quality of work she is doing.

This discussion suggests that local identities have a significant influence in shaping civic interests and practices. Local identities are not “weakened” by global orientation, but they do get critiqued and questioned and are likely to take a different form through the process of transculturation. The resulting local identities may be viewed as counter-normative, as they are a result of critical thinking combined with global orientation in women like my participants.

The Internet’s Role in Sustaining Marginal identities

Conversations with my participants and observations of online civic participation suggest that the Internet plays an especially significant role in the identity maintenance and civic work of those with marginalized identity axes, such as LGBTQ individuals, those from minority groups, or those whose ideologies differ radically from societal norms. Shirky (2008) argues that even when we look at identity as a personal attribute, “society maintains control over the use of identity as an associational tool” (p.204). Society offers its support for association to some identity groups, for example, parents in heterosexual conventional families, practitioners of hegemonic religions, certain professional groups, and sportsmen. Depending upon how severe the negative attitude a society has towards an identity, the members claiming that identity have to either remain closeted or face punishment. Shirky observes that with the new media

technologies, “whether society offers or withholds this support...matters less with each passing year” (ibid). The recent use of the Internet by anti-gay activists to track down gay and transgender individuals in Africa and Eastern Europe casts some reservations on Shirky’s observation, but my study shows that the Internet certainly makes it easy to find and connect to others with similar marginal identities, both without needing social approval and not being hemmed in by geographic boundaries. Florence, for example, shares that “[f]rom 2000 things changed in the LGBTQ community [in Namibia], and they have become less closeted...through Facebook, people came out and more connections are made online. People have realized that we can’t sit in frustrated silence, and we have tools such as Facebook at our disposal now. More people are coming out and making connections now.” Gulab’s radical thinking has similarly found a response online and she now has a transnational community there that she never had offline. Thus, online communities can have an affirmational impact on marginal identities, particularly through groups dedicated to collaboration, conversations, advocacy, and sometimes collective action.

The shaping of identities in the civic web-sphere. Most of my participants claim that they already had strong civic identities and interests before they got online. There are a couple of exceptions, such as Yohana and Laura, who credit the Internet for triggering their civic participation. All, however, admit that the Internet amplified their civic interest, strengthened their civic identities, and played a significant role in their global orientation.

Several scholars have recognized the fluid nature of identities and point out the importance of relations, social interactions, and negotiations with others in the constant shaping and reshaping of them (Buckingham, 2008; Jenkins, 2008; Tarrow, 2005). Calhoun (1992) critiques Habermas for treating identities and interests as settled within the private world and

refutes that they are brought fully formed into the public sphere. According to Calhoun, participation in the public sphere may contribute to developing a certain identity or clarifying identity positions. My findings endorse Calhoun's argument and shows that online civic participation does lead to shaping of new identities through information, connection, expression, and action online.

Women in my study give several examples of how civic work online has helped them carve out positive identities and new ways of looking at themselves. Some of the agency positions that emerge through civic participation are: global citizen (most of my participants claim that without the Internet this would not have been possible); spokesperson/speaker/advocate (Olfa, Valerie, Gwenn, Katerina); cultural ambassador (Laura, Yohana, Rola, Andrea, Febi); leader (Florence, Graciela, Olfa, Gwenn); peacebuilder (Shahla, Aya, Nadia); informed citizen (Mayang, Helen, Petronella, Rola); advisor and mentor (Saumya, Gulab); someone who supports fellow human beings and cares for them (Cristina, Ginger, Gwenn); and, someone who supports activists (Laura).

Valerie, for example, describes the transformation in her identity brought about through civic participation via social media:

Being raised in a traditional, Irish, Catholic, middle class, patriarchal family in the 60s and 70s...means as a girl...it is not important for you to have an opinion, and if you do have an opinion, you are supposed to keep it to yourself and not upset anybody. But the way to correct that is feeling confident about your opinion, and... social media makes me confident about expressing them.

From a girl with no voice, Valerie has now become an award-winning blogger with an

impressive following. Ginger has vivid memories of the early days of motherhood: “[T]hree boys completely put me over the edge, [I feared] I would never be Ginger again...I will forever be ‘mommy’ with no career and nothing to show for even though my children are everything to me(…)”. This personal conflict fueled Ginger’s interest in the issues of women and work and women’s health, especially the neglect of maternal health in the U.S. It was the Internet, however, that helped her to carve a niche as a blogger and an advocate even while living on an island. Aya says that she truly feels she is a global citizen only when she is online: “When you are in a context where you are with people from different parts of the world and then you know you feel like a global citizen. If I am in Morocco I feel I am Moroccan. I don’t feel like a global citizen because I am not in the global setting.” Helen has barely finished high school in a small South African town, but due to her online networking with animal rights groups, she sees herself as an activist. Helen also thinks that online spaces offer a better venue to a young woman like her to express these new identities. It is often difficult to express activist identities in the offline context of school in a small town. It is Gulab, however, that represents a truly transformed identity through online engagement. Gulab remembers being depressed, even suicidal, and isolated until she got online, started writing provocative posts that showed her critical stances, and acquired a huge following, mainly of young *desi* men and women. She now sees herself as a mentor and a role model: “As I had no role models growing up and there are these other *desi* girls on Tumblr or Twitter who have no role models and a lot of people do tell me that they look up to me...it really humbles me that I can support other people because I didn’t have a single person who cared about me growing up, not a single person.”

The above discussion shows that a strong civic identity, shaped by multiple lifeworld factors, is an important facilitator (with some exceptions) for meaningful civic participation

online. It is also important to note that civic participation itself can produce a sense of civic agency and can strengthen civic identity. My analysis shows that online civic participation plays a major role in shaping women's civic identities and also self-identification as global citizens.

2. Values

Values, like identity, influence women's civic choices and practices and at the same time also get reinforced or challenged in the process of civic participation. A striking observation in my study is that, despite vast differences in geo-political and cultural locations, my participants share many core values.

During the course of the interviews, I identified a set of nine common core values that influence my participants' civic engagement and remain constant in online as well as offline contexts: one, a sense of equality based on common humanity; two, empathy and a feeling of connection for others, including the "distant others;" three, an open and positive attitude towards other cultures (that includes respect and tolerance for other cultures, curiosity or hunger for knowledge about other cultures); four, critical thinking and objectivity; five, a passion and commitment to stand up and speak out for what they believe in; six, a moral obligation to share privilege; seven, volunteering; eight, trust; and nine, faith in personal agency. Spirituality and a higher purpose in life as a basis of living a meaningful life was also discussed as an important value by a few women in my study (for example, Ginger, Nadia, Gwenn, Florence, Helen, and Graciela). I briefly discuss each of the core values and how it affects civic identities and inspires global engagement.

(i). Equality Based on Common Humanity

Their faith in our common humanity is a driving force behind the civic work of all my participants. Sania, for example, says, "To me, to have your self validated as a person in this

world you only have to be breathing.” Aya similarly reminds us that “[w]e are all human beings and there are many things that we share in common... more than we think.” Equality figures prominently in Raji’s definition of global citizenship, Shahla’s mission to challenge discrimination wherever she sees it, and equal rights regardless of gender, race, and cultural origin is an important part of citizenship for Ginger.

Their quest for equality has made all the women in my study interested in gender equality and some also in immigration issues. Even when grounded in the cultures of their regional and national locations, most women see patriarchy and gender discrimination as universal issues. Shahla points out, “...I realized that these problems are the same across the cultures and all societies are patriarchal in nature...There are very few women who are in the decision making positions.” This is why when Shahla advocates for gender equality, she sees her work as global engagement. Yohana is concerned about Brazil’s treatment of African immigrants, and Sania, Gulab, and Aya express concern about immigration issues in the U.S. These concerns figure prominently in the blogs, civic actions, and social media conversations of all these women.

(ii). Empathy and a Feeling of Connection for Others, including the “Distant Others”

All of my participants show a deep sense of empathy and connection with others who are not necessarily connected to them through a shared national, ethnic, or religious identity. Whether it is Andrea’s deep feeling of empathy for the Pakistani women that she saw in a television documentary, Ginger’s empathy for young Afghan refugee girls who need nutritional supplements, Aya’s anger towards the ill treatment of the Palestinians, or Laura’s pain at seeing the dehumanization of the poor, these women are sensitive to the pain of their fellow humans.

My participants speak about their empathy in many different ways, particularly as extending support, solidarity, responsibility, and commitment. For Graciela, for example, “to be

present” when others need her is the value that guides her civic work. Gulab says she works “from the place of love for the land, the nature, for animals, and for people, which is very very unapologetic.” Gulab claims that “it is this kind of love that allows [her] to critique racism and sexism.” The empathy they feel is expressed through many different online activities: they sign petitions; share information, appeals, citizen produced videos, and pictures; share their own strategies of advocacy; and often show symbolic support through changing their Facebook status or mentioning these global issues on their blog posts. Most of my participants are also aware that these online actions are not enough in terms of actually changing the situation of those who are suffering. Their empathy intersects with this awareness and often results in a constant internal battle between hope and resignation, a feeling of agency and a feeling of helplessness.

(iii). Respect for Other Cultures along with a Hunger for Knowledge about Other Cultures

My participants not only “tolerate” other cultures, they show genuine respect for diverse cultural practices, adopt “good” practices from other cultures, and are curious to know more about them. In fact, Febi’s interest in “interacting with foreign people” led her to online civic communities. Sania, Katerina, and Saumya stress “open mindedness, expanding one’s world view, and engaging with others without barriers and with respect” as important civic values. Saumya goes a step further and notes how important it is to break our preconceived notions about a culture. Growing up in California, she was exposed to Latin American culture, but her stay in Argentina opened her eyes to the cultural differences in Spanish speaking countries. Saumya tries to focus on avoiding essentialism and understanding cultural nuances while interacting online, but admits that “it is very challenging” and “needs a lot of effort” considering the short and fragmented nature of most exchanges online.

According to Slimbach (2005), transculturalism is “rooted in the pursuit to define shared

interests and common values across cultural and national borders” (p.206). Their cultural openness makes it easy for my participants to practice transculturalism, to bond with “different others” online and engage in meaningful dialogue.

(4). Objectivity and Critical Thinking

All my participants value independent and critical thinking. These women do not easily accept arguments or rhetoric advanced by nationalist, religious, patriarchal or ethnocentric groups. They show a willingness to question anybody and everybody whether it is their family, religious and political leaders, corporations, governments, or friends. Besides, their flexible, critical, and open approach to cultures includes their own national and ethnic cultures. For example, Cristina critiques Romanian nationalism and the myths it has created, Ginger is constantly researching and writing against genetically modified foods in the U.S. and the corporations who produce and sell them, Graciela writes against corporatization of the Internet, Valerie critically analyzes U.S. policy affecting women and mothers, and Yohana is a stern critic of Brazil’s immigration policies.

(5). The Passion and Commitment to Stand Up and Speak Out

Most of my participants speak their mind in offline contexts as well as in online spaces. The courage and clarity to articulate their positions stem largely from their valuing of objectivity and critical thinking. “Speaking out against injustice” is at the center of Sania’s blog/website and her expression on other platforms. She says, “Yes, I think once we recognize that we are all same human beings, it is important to speak up for one another, and speaking out against tyrannical governments.” Shahla says, “I have in depth understanding of the women’s issues [in Pakistan] from my childhood and I have the courage to raise [my] voice about these discriminations and inequalities.” Her commitment to women’s rights is visible online in her commitment to the

Indigenous Feminist Network she runs on Facebook and the many posts she shares on her homepage.

(6). A Moral Obligation to Share Privilege

Women in my study are fully aware that they have privileges that many women in their countries and in the world do not have, but most show the desire to share the benefits of their privilege with others. Florence's views reflect those of many other participants. She says, "I am privileged in the sense that I have access to resources, access to the Internet, access to networks that really empower me as an individual, empower me as part of the institution that is working for better development of women...there is a need for me to grow as a person, to be a better person for my community as well." Valerie, on behalf of all Americans, feels a "deep moral obligation to do something to help women around the world." She says, "I feel somebody who had an opportunity and education I have, is absolutely obliged to help others...the little minimum she can do for her sisters around the world. I have [a] safe house to live in, I have food in my kitchen, and no one to drop [a] bomb in my city. There are women all around the world, trying to protect their children under the howling circumstances(...)." Aya's words echo similar sentiments, "I feel that I *have* to do this work...like I feel that if I have the opportunity, if I have the skills, if I have the means to create any kind of change I *have* to do it. What's the point of being in this life of you are not here for each other?" Women like my participants who are in a position of privilege have complex dilemmas to face in their civic engagement. While my interviews have not probed these dilemmas in detail, they did get mentioned fleetingly when my participants acknowledge the gap in what they think they should do and what they are actually doing for the less privileged.

(7). Volunteering

Although my participants do not reject electoral engagement, they certainly give more or at least equal emphasis to volunteering as a mode of civic participation. It is one way of sharing their privilege, showing empathy, and contributing towards the causes they care about. None of the women in my study do voluntary work because they simply need to do something with their time. They all have full schedules as professionals, students, and mothers. All of them are serious about their careers/studies and for some of them their civic engagement is closely associated with their professional work. Ginger, for example, has a busy practice as a physical therapist and educator -- and also three boys under seven -- but she still finds time to write guest blogs on women's health as a service. She says, "...I can't live or breathe without some kind of humanitarian work or music and so when I get to do both [as when she organized music concerts for fundraising for Haiti] at the same time its just the best."

It is important to note that several of my participants have found opportunities to travel, attend conferences, speak, or conduct workshops through their online civic participation. The voluntary civic work certainly seems to be helping their professional achievement but as Valerie explains, their civic work is primarily mission- or issue- and not career-driven. According to Ginger, the reward is to witness the good that comes through these efforts. Andrea points out that she began volunteering and contributing to online communities with no expectation for rewards. Rewards came their way once they carved a niche for themselves. Similarly, Mayang started volunteering on TakingITGlobal as a college student because of her interest in global issues and was only later given opportunities to attend youth conferences.

As mentioned earlier, some of these women have also stayed in professions that align with their civic values even when they know they could make more money in other careers.

Graciela, for example, says, "...Sometimes I think of quitting...I don't earn that much money as I would like to, I would need to earn more money (...)." Graciela knows that with her qualifications and digital skills, she can make much more money elsewhere, but it is her commitment to the issue of Internet governance and her confidence in the impact of her online publishing that keeps her doing the same work, even with the hurdles and frustrations she encounters and the sheer hard work it demands.

(8). Trust

Dahlgren (2007, p.20) stresses that in a democracy "horizontal civic trust" -- "trust among or between groups of citizens" -- is as important as citizen trust in government representatives and institutions. Trust also plays an important role in building online communities. Several of my participants mentioned the difficulty in finding a like-minded community in their geographic proximity. Their valuing of a sense of community led them to the option of creating one online. For example, Ginger's blog was an attempt to create a supportive community for mothers and women, while SunFlower Post started by Febi and Andrea was envisioned as a global, virtual community for young women.

Without their ability to trust "virtual" strangers, these women would not have been able to form the online transnational coalitions they have, nor could they freely extend their resources to "distant others." My participants prefer to approach new connections with trust rather than mistrust. Andrea, for example, says, "I have never worried about that, I trust too much. I will get to know the person and may be trust them after knowing them only online." Similarly, Graciela says that many people are present in her life without meeting her face-to-face, and she has been present for others when she was called upon. I personally experienced these women's disposition to be open and trust strangers through their enthusiastic responses to my requests for interviews.

Building trust online, however, is a complicated process when there is no one-on-one personal, embodied interaction; nor are there the local signposts one uses in a geographic community to build and feel trust. My participants have their own mechanisms for making the decision of trusting or not trusting. Ginger has successfully collaborated on projects with women whom she has never met face-to-face. She uses their credentials and online footprints as her guide to trust them. She also says that she tends to trust those who are connected to non-profits, universities, and other sites of education. There are also women like Katerina who refrain from sharing too much personal details or stories on social media. Most of these women tend to just shake off negative experiences and do not let these dissuade them from future encounters, even though they may become a little more cautious in their approach.

(9). Faith in Personal Agency

A common value my participants share is faith in individual agency amidst frustrations and setbacks. Cristina shares her philosophy: “[I]f you change ideas of a person or two you contribute to the change...maybe that person will try to help others.” Cristina further explains how over the years her approach to social change has undergone a transformation. She says, “When I passed high school, I was very idealistic, I am very idealistic right now too [laughs]...but things don’t work like that. It is very hard to get there, it is even harder to change the world, but my NGO experience made me understand that if I am working on grassroots causes and working directly with people, maybe I can do a little better.” Their faith in their personal agency often meets with challenges. Febi’s response to frustrations is “it is not a big deal” while Ginger, an accomplished Yoga practitioner and teacher, tries to focus on the teaching that Yoga means not being attached to the outcome. She states: “I have that up in my office that I’m not attached to the outcome, I do my best and leave it at that.” A common trait these women

share is that they shake off their disappointments and do not easily get disheartened.

Lifeworld Influences on Individual Value Systems

Most women in my study indicated that their core value system got established very early on, almost as an inseparable part of their identities. They express this through phrases like “I always had this heart for people” (Gwenn) or “I always had the heart to help” (Ginger). Nadia puts it in even stronger words: “I cannot do anything else. It is a calling, like a belief, religion (...).” Despite these claims, my participants credit several lifeworld influences for the values that guide them in their civic participation and life in general. These influences include parents, family, and other mentors, civic opportunities, books and media, education, and macro events. I will briefly discuss these influences with reference to shaping of values that contribute to civic interest and agency.

Parents, Family, and Mentors

Most of my participants mention parents and family as an influence but further conversations show a limited and indirect role of parents and family in shaping civically engaged women. Interestingly, both positive and negative family situations encourage civic values. Several participants mentioned family values like inclusion, solidarity, and charity and progressive political views that contributed to their own civic values. They also acknowledge some parental influence in practicing these values that nurtured their inherently helping and empathetic personality. Rola remembers that her childhood home in Lebanon was always open with food. Andrea, Petronella, Laura, and Sania give direct credit to their parents (and also her grandfather in Sania’s case) for instilling the basic values that directly fed into their civic interests. In some other families like those of Nadia, Laura, and Aya, whose parents were into academics, access to books was easy and discussions of current affairs were frequent. This

encouraged children to think about the larger context.

It is important to note, however, that apart from Helen, whose mother worked as a community social worker, or Florence, whose father is a member of parliament, no one had parents who were actively engaged in civic or political work. This indicates that the desire to actively engage in civic work is a path chosen by my participants mostly independent of direct parental influence. In short, it is not that only civically active parents produce civically active daughters!

Witnessing gender discrimination plays a large role in influencing these women's civic interest. Shahla, for example, traces the roots of her value for gender equality in early discrimination, "I have eight sisters and one brother. Living and being brought up with limitations and restrictions, I have in depth understanding of the women's issues from my childhood." Laura recalls being disturbed by gender bias, sexism, and particularly the obsession with women's physical beauty in Venezuela. Sania's intimate understanding of gender discrimination in Moslem communities, Cristina's close observation of domestic violence in Romanian families, and Nadia's witnessing of violence against women in Morocco are some other examples of negative situations in the lifeworlds that led to civic interest. At the same time, for women like Yohana and Laura, it was their personal experience of being raised free from any gender discrimination in societies rife with gender bias that motivated them to work on gender issues so that other women could enjoy the same benefit of freedom and choice.

The experience of my participants shows that the presence of even one or two supporting civically-minded adults can help shape civic values even when the overall family or community ambience is not supportive. While Helen's mother had been involved in community development for some time, it was actually friends of the family who were influential figures in her deep

conviction about gay rights and vegetarianism. Even though Florence's mother has been a strong role model in other areas of her life, she has been critical of some feminist practices. Her actively feminist aunt was one of the influences in Florence's exposure to the feminist movement in Namibia. Civic-minded and caring teachers played a role in getting Cristina introduced to NGO work in the absence of any formal volunteering structure in Romania. Petronella is grateful that she was "constantly surrounded by grown-ups who believed" in her, while Raji from Nepal has found a guide and mentor in her spouse.

Other Influences in the Micro Lifeworld

Early civic opportunities provided by religious institutions, schools, and youth organization have varied degrees of influence on the civic values of my participants. The interviews reveal that different cultures and countries offer different structures and opportunities for youth civic participation. These opportunities help to channel early interests and raise questions for critical thinkers. Andrea, for example, started her civic participation in a church but later had several questions about church-led volunteering. "I was 13... I liked everything but not the church. I knew that I was doing the right thing but not in the right place," recalls Andrea. Laura makes a similar critique: "I was in a Catholic school. All the social work we did there was about religion. I now see it as a negative." Also, not all cultures provide formal volunteering opportunities. For Cristina, Raji, Sania, Gulab, Valerie, Mayang, and Febi, there were no early, formal civic opportunities that they remember as influential in their later civic work.

School has long been considered an important location where young people experience early civic opportunities. Surprisingly, hardly any participant in my study experienced this except Helen in South Africa who had initiated the school's Green Group, a volunteer program, and Saumya, who participated in a student-led protest against the firing of a teacher in her

California school. In the case of my participants' college experiences, however, there were ample opportunities to develop critical perspectives, particularly in terms of social justice. Even when college structures and experience greatly vary among countries, several women in my study claim that college education, especially in the humanities and social sciences, gave a boost to critical thinking and changed their perspective on many socio-political issues. For some like Saumya, it actually initiated her into civic engagement and also generated interest in world news, something she had avoided until high school. College-based student groups have also given Febi and Mayang a taste of volunteering and taking leadership in Indonesia.

Another common attribute to all my participants is their early, eclectic, and voracious interest in reading, and their general curiosity about the world. Almost all my participants are avid readers, most from an early age. They also claim that their reading interests differed from those of their peers. They chose books that touched various aspects of life and took them beyond their immediate surroundings and culture. Graciela was interested in history, archaeology, and studies of patriarchy, which linked her in many different ways to her feminist work afterwards. She remembers her deep interest in reading even as a child when “[she] had a book in [her] hand while [her] friends went skating.” Florence had been a voracious reader as a child and she now spends a lot of time reading online. Aya mentions Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a major influence, while Sania and Gulab have been devoted readers of history, South Asian and world literature, poetry, and books by critical and radical thinkers.

It is not difficult to see that early exposure to multiple and critical works have shaped my participants' worldviews, values, and civic interests, and it is also interesting to note that some of this happened way before any of them were exposed to the Internet. Even at a later stage in life books like *Half the Sky* and *The Price of Motherhood* have been powerful to push Ginger and

Valerie towards more active engagement with women's issues because they resonated with their already-established core set of values.

Early Exposure to Difference and Diversity

Early exposure to difference and diversity that interacted with the participants' inherent critical and empathetic dispositions encouraged them to ask questions, seek information about various cultures, strive towards intercultural sensitivity, and in some cases, work for conflict resolution. This exposure came through a variety of experiences: growing up as a bi-national, bi-cultural, or multi-cultural young person; study abroad opportunities; travel; or, multi-cultural peer groups/neighborhoods.

As I mentioned earlier in this paper, several of my participants (Nadia, Laura, Gulab, Sania, Rola, Katerina, Aya, Graciela, Saumya) have had bi-cultural upbringings. Graciela explains that her multi-cultural background (a blend of Lebanese, Italian, and Austrian heritage combined with a childhood in Brazil) had a deep impact on her approach to diversity and inculcated the value of respect and equality for different cultures. Nadia says, “ [Sometimes I feel] it would have been easier for me, my identity, if both my parents were from the same country, but because of being binational I have had unique and interesting experiences...every time I talk to someone I can put myself in their shoes...”

For Katerina, opportunity to study and live abroad at a young age influenced her worldview. She recalls, “ I was lucky to live and study abroad (in Poland) in the times when the USSR was still a very closed country. Living in Poland with my dad and mom, and studying at the Polish secondary school, gave me an opportunity to see the world quite differently from the vision of the world the vast majority of Soviet teenagers of my generation had.” Katerina credits this early experience with influencing her critical and anti-ethnocentric thinking.

Saumya, Laura, Nadia, and Cristina studied abroad at the college level. Such opportunities have not historically been easily available to women in Africa and Asia. While Saumya was brought up in a mix of Indian and American cultures in L.A., an internship in Washington D.C. with Women for Women International, a year of study abroad in Argentina, and a backpacking tour across Latin America changed her perspective on global gender issues. Febi did not have to travel abroad to get a multicultural experience. Her exposure to a diversity of cultures began in her hometown, Jakarta, where she was part of a belly dancing community, where “[She has] friends from Japan, Singapore, Australia (...).” This exposure later led her to explore online avenues like Interpal and couchsurfing. As Febi made more international friends she started developing interest in global issues. Later, Febi and Andrea met at a youth event in Turkey and collaborated on launching the SunFlower Post, an online discussion community for young women around the world. In fact, international youth festivals, programs, and conferences are also excellent channels for developing a global orientation, as shown in the experiences of Febi, Mayang, Olfa, Andrea, Florence, and Nadia.

Intersection of Personal and Larger Contexts

Macro-level lifeworlds, including transformative political/social events, interact with micro-level lifeworlds in order to trigger the core values of my participants. For Graciela, for example, it was the movement for the democratization of Brazil when she had just joined the university in the 1980s. Sania was hugely troubled and influenced by the huge backlash against not only Moslems but Sikhs, Hindus, other communities of color and hate crimes in USA following 9/11. For Aya, the ongoing Israel/Palestine conflict and its uneven and biased reporting was an issue that encouraged her leanings towards conflict-resolution work. The AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe and all over Africa had a strong tug on Gwenn’s already empathetic and

helping disposition. These transformative macro events triggered the core values the women already had developed and reinforced them further in the direction of democratic engagement. These intersections directed my participants towards causes that later also manifested in their online civic work. In some cases, rather than one transformative event, it is a sustained social experience that blends the personal and the public. While Florence turned her personal struggles for LGBT acceptance in Namibia into a civic movement, Gulab's repeated personal experiences of racism in her Chicago suburb has had a deep impact on her. These experiences led her to the path of critically engaging with identity and immigration issues.

The discussion above shows that the influences in the development of civic values are complex. While disposition emerges as a key element closely followed by broad reading, other micro-level factors like parents, family, community, and immediate culture play facilitating roles. These personal contexts then intersect with larger macro-level socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts in shaping different pathways that lead the women towards active civic participation.

Internet and Civic Values

The discussion so far has addressed how civic values are shaped and how they influence civic participation of women in my study. As I mentioned earlier, values and civic participation are to some extent co-constitutive and civic participation reinforces certain values, challenge some others, and may form new values. For the older cohort in my study, the digital media came into their lives when they were adults so it is understandable that they already had developed civic values before being digitally active. It was interesting to observe that most of the digital native participants also claimed that they already had developed civic values and interests before becoming active on the Internet. Laura and Yohana especially credit the Internet with developing

their civic interests, as their digital interest preceded their civic interest despite the fact that the basic civic disposition and core values were evident since a young age. For everyone, however, online civic participation reinforced the core value system that was already established.

My participants also share their experience of facing criticism or ridicule for being passionate about civic issues. They are often called “boring” or “crazy” by their friends. Cristina, for example, has faced ridicule and anger because of her posts on gender equality, but she continues undeterred. As a young woman of 18 Helen speaks out frequently against homophobia and for vegetarianism in her small town in South Africa even at the risk of losing some friends; and Graciela’s experience of facing criticism from her friends for “being politically correct” echo the experience of several other participants. This shows that sustained online civic participation requires strong civic identities and values.

In the next chapter I discuss my participants’ online civic participation with reference to the four dimensions of the transcultural citizenship framework that are associated with communicative action- information, connection, expression, and dialogue, and conclude in Chapter Seven with the dimension of action and efficacy.

CHAPTER 6: DOING TRANSCULTURAL CITIZENSHIP— COMMUNICATIVE DIMENSIONS

Chapter Five examined identity and values as constitutive dimensions of being both civic and global. This chapter examines the next four dimensions of online transcultural citizenship: information/knowledge, connection/networks, expression, and dialogue. These dimensions are associated with communicative action and highlight the processes and practices associated with the ways in which the Internet can facilitate transcultural citizenship. In Chapter Three I discussed in detail that communication, especially horizontal communication, is very important in the experience of transcultural citizenship that is performed as a bottom up, vernacular citizenship in non-institutional ways. Transcultural citizenship can benefit from membership in large networks and is not without the influence of larger macro-level forces but ultimately, it is realized in inter-personal connections across cultures. Identity and values are the first two dimensions of the transcultural citizenship framework that I have developed so I begin this chapter with the third dimension, that is knowledge/information.

3. Knowledge/ Information

In democratic societies as far back as ancient Athens, being well-informed has been considered the responsibility of a good citizen. An informed citizen has knowledge of and seeks out information about civic issues, current affairs, political actors, and government structures. Bennett et al. (2010) and Dahlgren (2011) consider knowledge/information an important dimension of civic engagement in their analytic frameworks, the scholarly definitions of global citizenship (Dower, 2003; Slimbach, 2005) give knowledge and information its due place and the global civic websites construct and present an ideal global citizen as an “informed citizen”.

The participants in my study also recognize the importance of being a well-informed

citizen. For example, when Helen, a highschool student from South Africa is asked about her views on global citizenship, she says, “[A] [g]lobal citizen should at least know what is going on in the world, have interest in different topics, should at least read about various things, essentials...Awareness is important for citizenship.” Mayang, a college student and takingITGlobal volunteer, has a similar opinion where awareness leading to an understanding of global issues is considered important for being a global citizen. My participants also consider the Internet one of their prime tools for acquiring and sharing information, especially on global issues and at a global level. Laura, for example, says, “If I had found Internet at 14 life would have been different, it would have exposed me to so many things world around...”

As receivers of information, these women value the Internet primarily because of the quantity and variety of information available online and also the ease of retrieving it. Sania, a Pakistani-American freelance writer, for example, says that “...[the Internet has changed] the way we think, the way we act, it is changing the way we get news. I have a TV in my house and tons of channels, but I get the news from the Internet. I feel there is more variety, resources, unbiased sources available on the Internet.” The other strong attraction of the Internet as a tool for gaining information is the multiplicity of sources available, and also the opportunity to obtain information from primary sources like bloggers and social media connections. Cristina, a doctoral student and a feminist activist from Romania, points out,

... [O]ne year ago I joined PCDN [Peace and Collaborative Development Network, a global civic community] and I have talked to many people about women’s issues on this network. You can read an article but talking to someone from that country, for example Namibia, can tell you much more than reading an article...talking with someone can give you more information about their way of handling things, to understand and to compare

and to decide if you can propose solutions (...).

Similarly, Florence, the founder of Y-Fem, Namibia, loves reading people's blogs "from any country...all over the world..." to see "what is going on in their minds." According to Florence and Gwenn, the Internet is also the best way to link to government officials and find out what they are doing for their communities, whether local or national.

Civic websites, news organizations, non-profits, and think tanks are all important online resources for my participants, who acquire information from these websites through surfing and more often through subscriptions and RSS feeds. As Graciela, a publisher and Internet governance activist from Brazil, points out, getting multiple perspectives on any issue is the first step towards global citizenship, and the Internet makes this easy. The critical thinking, the churning, the introspection, and intrapersonal dialogue that follows information reception by my participants is the most important facet of what I call "invisible citizenship" online.

These women value the Internet as an information tool not only for receiving information but for sending/sharing information as well. As senders my participants find it fascinating that they can reach a larger range of audiences with a speed that they have never experienced earlier. The ease and speed of sharing information through the Internet is changing the way groups form to collaborate and, in some instances, to take collective action.

If we return to the three categories of my participants based on their online engagement -- that is, leaders, connectors, and seekers -- there is a difference in their patterns of online information use, especially in terms of information sharing. For leaders like Florence, Gwenn, Cristina, Ginger, and Valerie, learning new information and sharing it is empowering and an important part of their civic work. Florence says, "I have always been the type of person who

wants to always, constantly, every single day learn something and if I learn something I want to share it with women...It is the information that I have that has made me the person I am.” The aspect that sets these leaders apart from the seekers is that the leaders also produce a lot of new information through their locally-rooted civic work and share this information locally and globally. Graciela’s online magazines and Ginger’s health blogs are good examples of sharing new information in an educational manner.

Seekers, on the other hand, receive much more information than they send out (create). Mayang, for example, has a long list of websites that she surfs almost daily to keep updated on current events, from Indonesian websites like the Jakarta Post and the Jakarta Globe to others from abroad like the Washington Post; she also looks at economics blogs, the websites of development organizations and educational institutions, and critical websites like brainpickings.org. In fact, when Mayang got to use a computer at home for the first time as a junior in high school, her main use of the Internet was to obtain information about social issues. Gradually, as her interest in these issues grew, she started looking for more interactive forums and found TakingITGlobal. After remaining a member for some time, Mayang started volunteering on TakingITGlobal that further encouraged her interest in global issues. Mayang’s experience shows that consumption of civic/political information could become the first step in a gradual development towards a more active civic participation.

The role of connectors leans towards synthesising and analyzing the information they receive and then sharing it in the form of blogs, essays, and interpretive news. While the leaders have developed in-depth knowledge about the issues the connectors pursue ongoing analysis of global trends as well as current topics in the news of their own countries and cultures. These women are not satisfied with just acquiring knowledge. Their deeper understanding makes them

aware of the myths, misconceptions, hegemonic perceptions, and propaganda surrounding issues and cultures and they want to write against these misperceptions. Gulab, an Indian-American DIY activist, for example, persistently shares information on correcting biases against South Asians in America, and Muslims in the Indian and *desi* Hindu communities. She invests much time and energy in researching these topics; she says, “I read a lot of academic books all the time and I like to translate these books into idiom that reach the public.”

My participants reveal the growing role of social media in information receiving and sharing. Social media, especially Facebook and Twitter and to a lesser extent blogs, have become an important source for my participants to keep up-to-date on the latest happenings, especially through consuming multiple viewpoints in-depth analyses. For example, for young women like Helen, Facebook represents an important space for civic exposure and interest development. Helen says: “On Facebook, I often scroll on the Animal Liberation Foundations work, also PETA and lots of animal rights groups and campaigns, also anti-racial groups(…).” If she finds something that piques her interest, she might look up the original website. Most of my participants depend on the RSS feeds on their Facebook pages instead of visiting the original websites. They prefer to “like” different websites on Facebook or to follow them on Twitter. For these connectors, it is easier to share and repost information using Facebook and Twitter.

Concerns with Information Online

My participants share three main concerns with information online: one, the overwhelming quantity of constant new information causing information fatigue; two, the challenge of filtering useful and quality information from the vast amount of mediocre information; and three, the challenge of synthesising the available information from multiple and contradicting sources to prepare the ground for intervention. All three concerns are important

from the point-of-view of practicing global citizenship.

There is an overwhelming quantity of information for global and even transnational issues. Florence, for example, sometimes finds the Internet “extremely exhausting” when searching for information. Saumya, an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin, confesses to often being frustrated by the sheer quantity of daily information and the time needed to share it on social media. She says, “For me, the frustration is that there is so much information [that] I can’t keep up. Even on Twitter, there is sometime too much. Just look at [the] Washington Post, I can’t read all of it. We get so much...It is like no time to even think or analyze critically(...).” She also questions if all the information is of any use and whether people who really need the information get it.

Several women try to keep their information inflows manageable by restricting the information they receive to their chosen issues and also, at times, to a few chosen countries. Some also shut themselves off from new information for several days when they experience immense fatigue. When the information inflow is available 24/7, it naturally competes with other areas of one’s life and what reads and what one misses depends on several external factors, such as lifeworld obligations or other online attractions. Aya, a conflict resolution student and volunteer from the U.S. does not see this as a huge concern, though. She says, “For me, being a global citizen does not mean you have to know everything about everywhere in the world. That’s impossible.” Aya believes that it is not the amount of information consumed but rather, respect for fellow citizens, their ideas, and their ways of living that are the true hallmarks of global citizenship.

Other concerns are the authenticity and credibility of sources. Saumya, for example, worries whether people would actually read what she shares or would decide to just opt out.

Andrea, a journalist and blogger from Mexico, points out, “You will have to share it [on multiple platforms] and you have to invite people, there are so many blogs [that] you will be lost in it (...).” Gwenn, a volunteer and a leader from Zimbabwe who works on reproductive health issues in Africa says, “Fabricated messages can create a problem, so personal discretion is important.” Credibility and authenticity of the information sources is doubly challenging when global because one does not have the necessary contextual background to filter the sources.¹

It should also be noted that not all the women in my study see Internet-based information as a way of enacting citizenship. Women like Katerina see the Internet “as the most convenient way to communicate and to find necessary information,” but she refuses to consider information sharing as enacting citizenship. Katerina believes that what use the information is put to is very important in civic engagement. Thus, information is considered an important, but not sufficient, step towards becoming an active citizen.

4. Connection/Network

Manuel Castells argues in his concept of the “network society” (Castells, 2000) that where we live, where we communicate, and where we belong do not necessarily correspond. Social relations and networks are considered significant in the way individual identities are shaped and performed, especially civic identities. One of the most attractive affordances of the Internet is the opportunity for and ease of forming and maintaining connections beyond one’s geographic boundaries. At the same time, Buckingham (2008) and Livingstone (2009) have observed with reference to young people that their online connections are still predominantly

¹ Gwenn experienced this firsthand during my study. She shared a news story on her Facebook page that was titled, “The Punjab Rape Festival.” The fabricated story went on to report on a traditional rape festival in the Indian state of Punjab where men attacked unmarried girls. Soon, Gwenn’s Facebook post started getting comments from her connections spread all over the world about the urgent need to take action. The story, it turns out, came from a website that manufactured such fake stories in order to create a buzz.

with whom they know offline -- friends, family, and colleagues. When my participants speak about why the Internet is important to their civic experience and their self-identification as global citizens, however, all of them mention the connections and networks they have formed, very often with those geographically distant from but ideologically close to them.

This section examines connection/network as a dimension of civic culture and looks at the kind of networks and connections my participants are forming online -- and, of course, the role these play in enacting citizenship.

Nature of Online Networks

My analysis suggests that the online networks my participants form are complex, diverse, multiple, and at times unstable. They vary greatly in size from very large networks like TakingITGlobal (TIG) and Avaaz (which have approximately 450,000 and 34,262,642 members respectively)² to very small like the SunFlower Post (less than 20 regular members). Many large networks like TIG have multiple smaller networks within them, which are mostly based on issues and/or geopolitical locations.

Most of my participants use multiple online platforms -- e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, issue-centric websites, professional websites, and friendship-centric websites to make and sustain connections. In some cases, the networks on each platform are distinctly different from the others, with some cross-cutting connections. The frequency and intensity of interactions within networks also vary according to the nature of the network and also individual participants.

Some younger women in my study, like Andrea, Yohana, Cristina, Saumya, and Florence, are

² In the case of Avaaz new members are added every minute! This number is for March 26, 2014 at 8:35 US central time. In just a few minutes of my being on their website the number kept going up. Avaaz counts everyone who clicks on its petitions as members. This loose definition of membership inflates its reported numbers, but I use the organization's numbers here because it indicates their own conceptions of membership. It is impossible, however, to independently verify these numbers, so such claims need to be taken as the subjective claims of organizations, not as data.

almost constantly connected, mainly through Facebook but also through Twitter.

For the sake of simplification, I group these networks on two opposite axes in three different categories:

1. ego-centric-----issue-, identity-, or interest-centric
(Facebook, Twitter) (E.g. UNOY Peacebuilders, AWID, couchsurfing)
2. local, regional, national-----transnational, Global
(Youth Ki Avaz) (Y-Peer, SAYWNET)
3. informal-----formal
(SunFlowerPost) (PCDN)

Analysis of my participants' networks shows that each woman can be seen as a part of a web of online and offline connections, with a varying proportion of local and global connections and a varying number of strong and weak ties. It is interesting to note that although most of my participants self-identify as global citizens and do have some global connections in their ego-centric networks, very few participants have online networks that are truly global. In Febi's case it is her passion for international friendship that has made her widely connect globally, while for Andrea, Olfa, and Florence, their global connections are a result of their active participation in global civic engagement initiatives, both online and offline. Others, such as Ginger and Valerie, have online civic and social connections that are more national than global. In Raji's case, while she is part of several global networks like Student World Assembly, Girls Help Girls, and ABC4for All, all of these connections are weak and her strong individual and social connections are mostly from Nepal. Bicultural women like Sania, Gulab, Rola, and Aya have transnational connections that mainly consist of those in the country in which they are living and those in their countries/regions of origin.

Although in reality a higher number of connections in my participants' online networks are local or national, it is remarkable that it was the Internet's potential to connect them to people globally that became its main attraction to several women when they initially went online. Cristina recalls those early days in Romania: "[In] an Internet café used for chatting, I used the service MIRC before Yahoo for chatting with people all over the world(...)." Andrea did the same as a young adolescent, Febi still uses the Internet to find friends all over the world, and Mayang says that she primarily uses in Internet to obtain information and to keep in contact with friends from other countries.

Florence provides a good case for describing how cross-cutting connections of various types from the web of civic network for a non-profit leader and an activist like her. Florence is constantly available online or on her phone. Access to smartphones has also made it easier for her to stay connected, especially because Internet access has been unreliable and expensive in Namibia. Some of her online connections are drawn from her offline contacts, while some are only online. Florence describes the composition of her networks: "I have a bunch of friends on Facebook...like half of them I don't know, half of them are out of my country whom also I don't know!" She explains why this is so: "No one can work in isolation. We need to work with partners across the world- not just to share information but share strategies... to find out the situations that are going on in different countries... how to perform coalitions, link with different civil society groups in other countries(...)."

Because Florence is a leader she is at the center of several of her networks like Y-Fem, LGBT Namibia, and SAYWNET. At the same time, she has a less prominent role in several large global networks like AWID and Young Feminist Wire. In these large issue-, identity-, or interest-centric networks, Florence mostly has weak ties, but these networks serve an important

purpose in her experience of global citizenship by keeping her updated on LGBT and feminist issues, offering new connections and opportunities for symbolic action, and discursively strengthening Florence's identity as a global citizen with agency. It is through her ego-centric networks made of strong as well as weak ties, for example Facebook and Y-FEM, that Florence expresses her civic identity, mobilizes local young women, influences the national agenda, maintains some selected connections from the larger networks, and share strategies with other activists. These civically-oriented activities are, however, carried out in ego-centric networks like Facebook amidst other personal and social activities that are friendship- or family-oriented. Both social and civic types of networks provide the social capital necessary to carry on civic work because civic work is carried out in connection with others.

Helen, on the other hand, falls in the category of a seeker. At 18, she is barely out of high school. For young girls like Helen, ego-centric networks are more local and based on family and friend relationships that spring from offline connections. Helen's passion for making global connections has, however, led her to explore online networks in the area of animal welfare. Helen is at the far end of the periphery in these formal networks; for example, PETA and the Animal Liberation Foundation. Febi, Mayang, and Shrijana, again all seekers, are also members in large student networks that provide them connection to international student communities. Even though these young women are at the periphery of such global networks, they claim that these networks raise their awareness about global issues and strengthen their identity as global citizens through symbolic actions like signing petitions, liking and endorsing posts on Facebook, sharing global information on the issues of interest, finding international friendships, and sometimes making personal connections with a mentor.

My analysis suggests that being a leader and at the center of a network has a higher

association with civic expression, dialogue with different others, and sharing new information as shown by Florence's example, while being a seeker and at the periphery of large networks, as shown by examples of Helen and Febi, is more associated with receiving and resharing information, and dialogue with self. Both, however, can facilitate action. The seekers claim that just the act of connecting globally, receiving information, showing support and solidarity, sharing stories, and giving even minimal input shapes and reinforces these women's global civic identity.

Bonding Online

My participants' networks show the existence of a strong and stable bonding with a selected few alongside many weak ties. According to Katerina, an international consultant from Kazakhstan it is not whether you meet online or offline, but it is the "sharing [of] similar ideas and interests" that makes a difference in creating bonds. Several women in my study narrate the experience of strong bonding with online connections. The core members of SunFlower Post, for example, have grown to be close friends though only a few have actually ever met offline. While the SunFlower Post has also seen several members joining and then dropping out, the bond between the few core members has remained intact. One-on-one friendships also flourish online, such as the one between Febi and Andrea or between Valerie and Ginger. Another example is Graciela, who has been online since the early days of the Internet in Brazil and became part of a mailing list of women that she found during an online search. Some of them became her "very best friends during important moments of life." This is in a way a unique advantage of online communities because it would be difficult to gatecrash an offline group of women the way Graciela did an online one.

Gulab especially values her online bonding. She fought depression for a long time and

she thought she would always be lonely in the world until she found her online community. As she explains, “[T]hat’s why I go to Tumblr and Twitter a lot even if I don’t post anything -- because it reminds me that there are people like me...for most of my life up until [the] end of college, I felt that there was nobody like me and that was a very lonely world to live in.” Sania has similar reasons for turning to online communities: a total disconnect with people in her Chicago suburb and a heartwarming response from people she connected with on Tumblr and Twitter. She considers many of these online connections to be true “friends.”

When women bond online transnationally, their connection to their new friend’s country becomes personalized. The Internet thus plays a positive role in promoting intercultural and cross-national connections and this can be considered a contribution to the increase in feelings of global citizenship. There is, however, a potential danger here that people may stop making efforts to understand those “different” from them in their offline lifeworlds because they have found like-minded people online. The tendency of women like some of my participants to ignore the people in geographic proximity in favor of people who are close ideologically may support the argument that global citizenship weakens local ties. Most of my participants, however, still demonstrate strong local ties despite their global networking.

Challenges of Online Bonding. As we just discussed, bonding online is a real possibility and it facilitates global civic identity. The technological barriers to connecting with people are collapsing; but what, my study asks, about psychological and social barriers? As my study shows, not all my participants embrace online bonding without reservations. These women bring up in our conversations several issues like trust, anonymity, the sometimes shallow nature of interactions, and the easy exit inherent in connecting online and women suffer additional challenges like unwanted sexual advances and stalking.

Nadia, a French-Moroccan journalis living in Morocco makes it clear that, for her, online bonding is rare and anonymity is often in the way of bonding online. She says, “There are people with whom I discuss political issues online but they are not ‘friends.’ Most of the time they don’t even talk with their real names so I don’t know who they really are, how old they are, or whether they are male or female.” Nadia’s experience of connecting online professionally has been very good, though, especially on Twitter and email, but she doesn’t mistake professional collegiality online with friendship or bonding.

Women frequently experience unwanted solicitations and sexual advances online that make them hesitant to connect and express themselves freely online. Cristina and Gwenn are skeptical about online connections because of this problem, and Aya notes that, “It’s probably not a good idea that I connect with everybody -- people with whom I work with and people and organizations I partner with...Sometimes I worry because I put my personal views out...but I feel like it is really important to be transparent(...),” she admits. Conflation of private, social, professional, and civic connections online, especially in ego-centric networks like Facebook and Tumblr, can cause the kind of dilemma identified by Aya.

My analysis shows that my participants use online networks for the following different purposes: (1). For friendship-based intercultural exploration that may lead to better understanding of other and own cultures; (2). To form issue-based or identity-based coalitions that strengthen their professional and civic work; (3). To share information and strategies with peers and stakeholders in their projects.(4). To form connections with people that are normally beyond reach in offline situations; and (5). To sustain their own sense of being “global” through engaging with global issues, connecting with a global audience or global leaders and peers.

The above discussion shows the different ways women nurture their own global identities through being part of online networks. This is accomplished through engagement with global connections, expressing ideas to their global audiences, and being part of global initiatives through their networks.

5. Expression

Expression is the fifth dimension of the transcultural citizenship framework. Scholars (Dahlgren, 2011; Mitra, 2001) and my participants both acknowledge “having a say” or “having a voice” as a crucial factor in experiencing civic agency. Expression features as one of the key dimensions in the frameworks developed by Bennett et al. (2010) for analyzing online civic engagement. Although ‘voice’ is certainly not unique to the online experience of citizenship, we sometimes fail to note the tremendous difference the Internet has brought with respect to the ease, speed, and reach of individual expression.

Online expression is highly multi-modal thanks to the increased individual capacity for multi-modal production and publication; for example, we might find text in long form and in bytes; personal stories and news stories; images that are personally-clicked photos, cartoons, graphics, or pictures taken by others; personal and professional videos; poetry; and music. These are all forms of civic expression that can be found online. For example, Florence has recently created a Facebook page for feminist poetry, Helen mostly expresses her concern for animals through sharing images from other websites, and Cristina posts pictures from the protest rallies led by her organization. Catchy pithy slogans with pictures (photographs or graphics) are a favorite of several participants in expressing their political stances.³ Cristina has found that only

³ My observations, however, show that longer deliberative pieces as examples of more traditional forms of deliberation are also not uncommon online. Valerie, for example, posts reflective comments along with the original news stories and analytical pieces, Ginger writes original health stories along with sharing health-related data, Andrea shares her own interpretive articles

a small group of people read her academic articles if she posts them on social media, while pictures that use humor or pithy slogans always attract many more readers. We should remember, however, that there is a long history of multimodality in civic expression all over the world- songs and music, posters, street theater, cartoons, and slogans all have always been the expressive tools used by activists even when these vernacular creative forms might have been ranked below the formal rational deliberation as civic expression. Scholars like Meehan (1995), Mouffe (2007), Papacharissi (2010), and Young (2000) have already critiqued this tendency of certain scholars to valorize rational-formal expression. The multimodality of online expression compels us to take this critique further as online expression globalizes the vernacular.

As we see here, the overwhelming quantity of multi-modal content expressed online challenges the conventional notions of deliberation. This, however, may have both a liberating and a constraining effect on what gets expressed online, how, and by whom. The ease of posting content online for those with the right infrastructure and necessary digital fluency has its pros and cons: On the one hand, it encourages spontaneous expression without extensive gatekeeping, while on the other, a lot of mediocre content may get posted online; on the one hand, one's voice reaches a large number of audiences and on the other, a considerable proportion of online expression lacks depth. In a positive sense, this abundance of expression is an indication of vibrant public participation and representation of multiple voices, while on the other hand, the abundance of expression can be overwhelming, creating barriers to both receiving and processing information, and also for reflecting and responding to online content. The quality of expression online is a serious and valid concern. My participants reflect on both of these sides. Florence, for example, is celebratory in her tone when she says, "I am now more active online

on various platforms, and Graciela writes on Internet governance and development for a niche audience of educators, development workers, and researchers.

thanks to my Blackberry smartphone, I download apps like Facebook, Twitter, Soundcloud, Youtube, Wordpress all those apps makes my life so much easier. Especially for Y-Fem, I use those apps to reach out to global audiences, not just locally.” At the same time, Saumya complains, “I can’t keep up. Even on Twitter, there is sometime too much...there is no time to reflect(...).” Nonetheless we have to acknowledge that the attraction of a free tool that gives one’s voice a global reach is certainly powerful.

Before addressing the question of how online expression is linked to citizenship I give here the basic analysis of the platforms my participants use for online expression and the audiences they expect to reach.

Channels/Platforms for Online Expression

The Internet provides women like my participants a choice of several different platforms for civic expression: civic websites, blogs hosted on civic websites, personal blogs, and social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. The selection of the platform by an individual depends on factors like availability of hardware and infrastructure, nature of expression, personal comfort and familiarity, and regional trends. Twitter, for example, is not as widely used as Facebook, especially in Africa and Asia, while women in the U.S. and South America use Twitter almost as much as Facebook. Except Gulab, and to some extent Sania, none of the participants use Tumblr actively. Rola and Graciela use Pinterest for visual material (but this is mostly not of a civic nature). A large proportion of my participants maintain either a personal or professional blog. On the whole, with some exceptions, the civic websites are used for brief comments, for reposting/resharing information, or for initial introductions but social media and especially blogs are the platforms for longer and more interpretative expression. Blogs are also hosted by civic websites and several participants like Mayang, Yohana, and Laura have found

that blogs hosted on civic websites draw a larger and more global audience and have a longer life than stand-alone personal blogs. Thus, civic websites still remain an important channel of expression.

Though English still remains a dominant language on the Internet, and I chose only the websites with content in English because of my own language limitations, several women in my study are bi-lingual or multi-lingual in their online expression. This widens the reach of their civic work. The most common language other than English used for online expression by my participants is Spanish, followed by French and Portuguese.

Speaking for Others?

Voice and privilege are closely connected. My participants are a group of digitally privileged women. Considering their high rate of online activity, it is not surprising that most of the women in my study have a high level of communication skill across modalities, including writing, photography, and digital publishing. Some, like Andrea, Yohana, and Nadia, have had formal journalistic training. Some, like Ginger, Valerie, and Florence talk about the difficulty of learning new digital media, but all have ultimately acquired digital fluency through self-teaching, attending workshops, or hiring help to effectively express their ideas online. These women also have the privilege of higher education and for most, professional qualifications. The question then is, are these women speaking on behalf of other women who are not so privileged? Are they aware of the burden the privilege places on them?

All of my participants consider their online expression as something that contributes positively to their civic work and identity. They acknowledge their privilege but they consider it their moral obligation to speak out for those who cannot do it for themselves. Olfa, for example, talks about getting education and skills not just for empowering herself but also to “move girls

like me from discrimination to active participation.” Shahla has traveled in the rural areas of Pakistan and found women in miserable conditions. She says, “When I learnt the computer, I felt responsibility to share the burden of others because I know the restrictions women have on them(…).” Are these women then, of course with good intentions, silencing the less privileged women by speaking for them?

Yuval-Davis (2006, p.282) draws our attention to privilege and representation in feminist advocacy.

...Feminists and other community activists cannot (and should not) see themselves as representatives of their constituencies (unless they were democratically elected and are accountable for their actions). Rather, they are advocates, working to promote their cause.

...One of the problems with both identity politics is that such activists and 'community leaders' too often become the 'authentic voice' of their communities (in their own eyes no less than in the view of others). This is often harmful to women and other marginal elements within these same communities.

Yuval-Davis talks about a milestone conference in Bologna, Italy that strived to build dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian feminists. The feminists in Bologna introduced the concepts of 'rooting' and 'shifting' (aligning with Putnam's bonding and bridging). According to them, “each such ‘messenger’ and each participant in a political dialogue would bring with them the reflective knowledge of their own positioning and identity. This is the ‘rooting.’ At the same time, they should also try to ‘shift’ -- to put themselves in the situation of those with whom they are in dialogue and who are different from them” (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 280-281). The participants in my study do not use these terms to talk about their online voice, but the interviews

indicate that they do practice rooting and shifting. This is a fairly reflective group and nowhere in the interviews do my participants identify themselves as superior or more qualified to speak for other women. Their approach is predominantly from a place of care and moral obligation. Advocacy emerged as one of the predominant intention of their online expression. Women like my participants, however, have to be always careful lest they silence marginal voices even with the intention to help them.

Blogging

I discuss blogging under a separate subheading under the dimension of expression because several of my participants maintain professional, civic, and personal blogs. Ginger writes a monthly blog for a Chinese medicine magazine *Ying Sheng*, and regularly on modernmom.com and her own website “Breathing This Life for Women.” She also guest blogs on invitation or to help out friends and colleagues in keeping their websites active. Febi and Andrea started *SunFlower Post*, a space for young women from different parts of the world to come together, blog, and find a safe and supportive space for expression about various aspects of young women’s lives. Gwenn has a personal blog, while Valeri’s professional and award-winning blog “Your (Wo)man in Washington” has brought her many admirers. Several women have a personal blog and also another blog hosted by a civic website (for example, Andrea [Vocative, Global Action for Climate Change, and Global Voices], Mayang [TakingITGlobal], Yohana [Global Voices], and Laura [Global Voices]). Graciela was one of the first bloggers in Brazil, while Laura is the only one among her friends who writes a blog. Gwenn has a personal blog, while for Sania, her personal website is also her blog. Blogs give my participants the freedom of space (there is no word limit there) and control over content, and are the prime platforms for the discursive expression of global civic identity as evident in the issues they

choose to write about, their global orientation in expression, and their hopes of reaching global audiences.

Papacharissi (2010) calls blogging one of the new civic habits and Harris (2004) recognises them as part of the contemporary cultural trend towards confessional practices. Blogs are also important in the analysis of how public, social, and private identities and expression come together in online spaces, as evident in the blogs of my participants. My participants' blogs show that even when written for civic or professional purposes and despite attempts to keep professional or civic blogs separate from personal blogs, personal stories, opinions, and standpoints dominate blog writing. Travel experiences, friendships, family anecdotes, religious faith, and books and movies all get woven into their narratives around civic issues. It is the aggregation of these personal stories, narratives and counter-narratives, and individual voices of resistance that gradually transform a personal concern into a public issue. If these personal stories gather enough public attention to get circulated and recirculated, they might get enough momentum to become political issues and create what Plummer (2003) calls "the culture of public problems" (p.81).

In spite of all the celebratory writing about blogs, my participants point out that it is not easy to maintain a consistent personal blog or a constantly-updated website. Even with access to technology and digital fluency, my participants face two major challenges in launching their blogs: one, finding the time to keep these spaces updated and interesting; and two, getting the audience to visit and read their blogs. Nadia, Gwenn, Florence, Saumya, and Mayang all find it challenging to maintain a regular frequency of new posts on their blogs, especially the personal blogs. The bigger challenge, however, is getting a loyal readership. With the abundance of expression online, both mediocre and high quality, it is very easy to "get lost in the crowd," as

Andrea observes.

Harris (2004) is critical about the lack of private spaces left for young women online and the scrutiny of the young women's interior lives that these spaces allow, but from what my participants claim, even when personal, blogs are meant to be read by others. This is one of the major differences between maintaining a personal diary or journal and writing a personal blog -- you are inviting others (a selected few or a large imagined audience, whatever the case may be for individual blogs) into your personal world. When my participants complained about blogs, it was not about people invading their privacy by reading their blogs, but rather, about the challenge of getting readers.

Response to Expression

It is a natural human need to seek response to expression. Online expression is no different, but due to the abundance of platforms and incoming online messages, online expression does not always find a recognizable response. Online expression is very often targeted to mass or at least large audiences and thus is considered impersonal, involving no obligation for response. When I ask Raji about why she thinks bloggers keep writing, even when there is no response, she says, "Good question! Same thing strikes my mind, when I comment no one answers me..."

It is also not easy to measure online responses. Some, like Andrea and Febi, use Wordpress for their blogs and can track down the number of visitors to the site, but as Graciela explains, statistics cannot give a complete picture about the impact of your expression: "Although we know the numbers of visitors to our sites we do not know who these people are, why they are reading, how they are using the information, this is really hard to know or measure.". Though Sania normally gets good responses online, a lack of response feels

disheartening to her. Valerie, on the other hand, is one of the women who regularly gets response to her posts but would welcome more response. Some of these women, for example, Mayang, Aya, and Katerina, claim that they welcome response but are not bothered by their absence nor do they stop expressing because of a lack of responses. “Every time I write (tweet, blog whatever), I always learn something, I like to learn,” says Yohana explaining why she keeps writing even when there is no response. Some others like Febi, Graciela, Florence, Gwenn, Laura, and Aya very rightly claim that lack of visible response to online expression does not mean there is no response. People still read, introspect, share, and use what they read online.

Truly intriguing is the fact that in conventional media like newspapers and magazine articles, for example, we never expect the reader to respond directly to the author. Why are we reluctant to accept that no comments online does not mean that people are not reading? Here I would like to reiterate my observation about the “invisible” citizenship practices that occur online and that women like my participants contribute to these practices through their online expression. My participants claim that deliberation does take place online but it is fragmented and spread over different spaces; for example, you may read an argument in one space and the counter-argument in another, or your comments get shared on someone’s Facebook page, about which you have no clue. All of my participants also argue that the actual reach of their writing is more than what the comments or statistics reveal because of multiple people sharing and silently reading their content.

Negative Response and Incivility. If dealing with no response to online expression is a challenge for my participants, there is also the challenge of negotiating negative responses. My participants’ experiences show that people comment negatively, disagree, mock, flame, and stalk online. This negativity and incivility creates much tension between these women’s desire to

reach diverse audiences and their aversion to conflict. Cristina talks about her role in a series of back and forth communications around gender in Romania. She recalls, “We started a campaign against a newspaper in Romania...it published a stupid article on women...We started a campaign and we tried to mock their initiative and...they are mocking our initiative and wrote an article about us and all the Romanian NGOs working on women’s rights.”

Negative responses, however, are sometimes welcomed more than no response because it gives the author a sense that they are reaching the intended audience. As Cristina argues that “when you get a negative response at least you know you have reached them. When I write editorials/articles about some issues...I know only people who are concerned with that issue will read...it is frustrating because...you are trying to change how people think and not reach people who already agree with you.”

Febi and Gulab, however, argue that they have received a more positive response to their expression online than offline. Febi prefers to express her views online because she thinks online spaces are more gender-neutral, while men are more sexist offline. Recalling her bitter and painful past experiences, Gulab says, “Whenever I talked about issues in Indian and Pakistani communities and in the diaspora they wouldn’t want to talk about it!... especially men, that is because desi men are very patriarchal, they would ask me to shut up, they laughed at me(...).” But Gulab has found a dedicated following on social media: “It is the Internet where people respect me, they understood me, heard me, encouraged me.”

The importance my participants attach to their online expression is not surprising given the relational and discursive ways that my participants experience global citizenship. If we go back to the way these women define citizenship and identify criteria for being a global citizen (see Chapter Three: Reconfiguring Citizenship), the Internet’s contribution is understandable.

Specifically because, as my participants' online civic expression shows,

- online expression facilitates relations, dialogue, and collaborations beyond national boundaries by providing opportunities to be remotely present, show solidarity, and support, and promote intercultural understanding;
- online expression offers opportunities to participate in globally relevant issues, produce counter-narratives to hegemonic ideologies, and reach global audiences with civic work without having to travel; and,
- online expression opens doors for a broad range of views, ideologies, and interactions, also giving them a chance to be introspective, think critically, and make civic choices.

6. Dialogue

In Chapter Two, we examined my participants' experience of citizenship as a discursive practice. Dialogue is the sixth dimension of my transcultural citizenship framework. Dialogue -- whether vertical dialogue between the citizens and the state or the governing bodies or horizontal citizen to citizen dialogue -- is an important discursive civic practice that is the building block of a truly democratic society. As Dahlgren (2006) suggests, it may be useful to recall writers such as Dewey (1954), who argue that a "public" should be conceptualized as something other than just a media audience. Publics exist as discursive interactional processes and the classic ideal of democracy still valorizes citizens who talk to one another (Barber, 1984; Dahlgren, 2006).

In envisioning a global democracy that rises above the confines of the boundaries of individual nation-states, dialogue acquires a more urgent status but at the same time poses unique challenges. Dialogue within a nation draws its participants based on national identities. Civic identities based on the Westphalian conception of the nation-state assume a common national identity that is based on a commonly shared culture (sometimes real, often assumed) replete with

shared symbols, myths, and narratives. These could act as the binding thread when diverse groups within the nation engage in dialogue. Dialogue at the global level, however, does not have the benefit of a shared cultural or ethnic heritage (real or assumed). Aya, therefore, describes the participants in transcultural or transnational dialogue as the “distant others,” not just geographically but also culturally. Aya’s argument aligns with scholarly arguments. It is also representative of the importance given to dialogue, especially with those considered “distant others” in my participants’ experience of global citizenship, even when it is fraught with challenges. Aya says, “You cannot be a global citizen unless you go out of the way to have respectful interactions with others who are different from you, who are from different parts of the world from you, or who have different world-views from you.”

This section examines the kind of opportunities the women in my study find and create online for dialogue and how these practices are associated with citizenship. The women in my study demonstrate that dialogue does take place in online spaces, albeit with limitations. When we look for evidence of civic dialogue online we must, again, remember that dialogue online does not always take place in rational prose. A picture could be responded to with a video, a long rational text with an emotional rhetorical question or a personal anecdote. Online dialogue, especially the DIY kind, shows the “permeability of contexts, the messiness, and unpredictability of everyday talk” Dahlgren (2006, p.278). My analysis shows three types of dialogue happening online: dialogue with self, dialogue with like-minded people i.e. dialogue with “us”, and dialogue with those ideologically or culturally different i.e. dialogue with “them”.

Dialogue with “Self”

Dialogue with “self” is invisible to the onlooker and therefore to the researcher, but most women in my study report having a constant dialogue with self as they read online messages,

stories, and comments, or see pictures and videos. This then leads to introspection and an internal debate about where one's own support lies. Aya emphatically shares her observations of online platforms, "...[T]here are dialogues... and there are people who watch other people's opinion, who are open to learning from posts, and there are all these people who comment and they are actually reading from each other and say oh! You know, you are right I never thought about that!"

Based on my conversations with my participants, I argue that dialogue with self does lead to much introspection and value clarification. I call it invisible citizenship because, although not overtly visible, many activities relevant to citizenship take place during a dialogue with oneself: deciding affinities, correcting positions, refreshing opinions, making decisions about extending solidarity and support, and in the long term, changing attitudes that may lead to civic action. Interestingly, when I first started observing civic websites and social media, I was struck by the vast amount of expression, venting out, and sharing of personal opinion in these spaces. "Everyone is busy talking, but where is the response, the dialogue?" I often wondered. My participants' self-reflection and emphatic observations about dialogue with "self" show that all of the expression and sharing online do not go unnoticed.

Dialogue with "Us"

There are many opportunities online through social media and civic websites devoted to specific issues to have a dialogue with like-minded people. Almost every woman in the study gave examples of this kind of dialogue with friends in social media networks, professional colleagues, supporters, and people who are interested in the same civic issues. For my participants, the "us" is determined based on ideological and not geographic proximity. During the dialogue with "us" women talk about issues, engage in collective problem solving,

collaborate on projects, share strategies, plan events and action, share information, and show solidarity. Andrea, for example, has regular conversations with young people active in climate change reporting, Mayang has weekly conversations with other TIG volunteers and mentors, Olfa with her friends in the global network of young development workers, and Febi with the global group of young women who writes for SunFlower Post. Florence has stimulating conversations with young feminists and LGBT activists in Nigeria, in the African region, and globally. Here, even when the participants in the dialogue or conversations are from different parts of the world and in that sense diverse, they share similar ideological and political leanings. The shared ideology seems to substitute for the shared cultural heritage of the ethnic/national group. Apart from social media like Facebook, Twitter, and to a lesser extent Tumblr, email, chats, and Skype are also used for these conversations.

Online dialogue becomes an effective approach for bringing new members into the fold even when some of the stakeholders do not share strong ideological principles but are open to new ideas. Florence, for example, has found that dialogue/conversations is a good way to sensitize and open young Namibian women to the possibilities of feminism. She explains,

In Namibia, for many young women feminism is a very new term. Even though their actions or values might be in some way feminist the term is very new to them. I have realized that many young women show quite a lot of interest in learning more about feminism and how they fit into the whole movement of women. Dialogue has a great potential to advocate on women's rights and allow women to create spaces and consciousness raising meetings to just to talk about themselves.

Dialogue with "us" has several benefits, psycho-social as well as civic. My participants

echo the feelings of activists worldwide that it is difficult to sustain long term activism and struggle for social justice whether at the personal, DIY level or at a more formal level. Dialogues with “us” help keep the morale high and isolation at bay, facilitate action that is well-informed, rejuvenate feelings of agency, and reinforce the civic and global identities of women. As several participants point out, even the simple gestures of liking, sharing, or retweeting are signs of acknowledgement that encourage them to express their thoughts online. Dialogue with “us” also facilitates global reverberations of local stories from which members draw inspiration, lessons, and sustenance. As Katerina points out, just the realization that there are similarly-feeling others in the world and they are not alone is a strong affirmative experience.

Dialogues with “us,” however, may also feel “stale,” like echo chambers. Several women in the study confessed to this feeling of preaching to the choir on civic websites. They also realize that dialogue with “us” helps in mobilization, but their advocacy efforts would be truly successful if they only were to reach those who need awareness, education, and ultimately attitude change. Several women in my study, therefore, discussed their conscious efforts to engage in dialogue with “them” -- those who do not think like themselves.

Dialogue with “Them”

Cristina, Yohana, Aya, Gwenn, Sania, and Gulab spoke at length about looking for opportunities or creating opportunities where they could get into a discussion or even a heated debate with “different others” over issues they were passionate about -- even when these interactions are unpleasant experiences. Cristina, for example, is active in protesting against domestic violence, engages in online as well as offline dialogue with those opposing women’s rights, and admits that she is even ready to endure mockery and criticism if it helps her cause. These “others” could be ideologically distant, culturally different, and/or geographically distant.

As we can see, each of these groups is difficult to reach in offline contexts either because of the lack of opportunity, high transaction cost, or lack of infrastructure. The Internet, then, makes it not only possible but technically easy to reach these diverse groups. Gwenn, for example, has a very diverse group of connections on social media so she keeps looking for moments on social media that can start a debate. Gwenn is my friend on Facebook and mentions one of her recent attempts to start a debate on domestic violence based on a recent case of the beating of a young actress by her boyfriend. Gwenn says, “For me, social media have been proved to be very effective because it ropes people into discussion, provoke them to share their mind(...).” Aya also frequently uses social media, especially Facebook, to initiate dialogue on provocative issues like identity markers and racism. She narrates in detail her social media experiment when she posted a picture of herself in a headscarf and was shocked at the kind of racist and anti-Muslim responses it provoked. Aya, however, expects that such initiatives force people to think about things they otherwise would never think about. When online conversations, however, become debates where each side is preoccupied with arguing one’s own stand rather than listening to the other’s point of view, the deliberation has the risk of becoming more “antagonistic” rather than “agonistic” (Mouffe, 2005). This may also apply to any of my participants who are passionate about the causes and issues they support. This may result in dialogue being used more as a strategic communication on their part rather than an open-minded exercise in understanding diverse points of view. In such situations, the question remains as to the final outcome. One can hope that such debates may later be followed up with a dialogue with the “self,” at least by some, that would lead to appreciating other perspectives and correcting one’s own bias. Since this remains a process invisible to the researcher, it is difficult to make any claims here.

Formal Strategies for Online Dialogue

What we discussed so far has been mostly with reference to spontaneous DIY dialogue in social media spaces. Talking about limitations of online conversations and the chaos of DIY dialogue, Shirky points out that for any group determined to maintain a set of communal standards, some mechanisms of enforcement must exist. Nadia observes that the Internet can certainly bring diverse people together on the same platform and that is no small achievement, but the Internet cannot generate meaningful dialogue without strategic efforts to have dialogue. Several organizations have recognized the potential of the Internet for fostering intercultural understanding and have made formal moderated dialogue a part of their work. Three women in my study have been engaged in formal strategic projects to generate online dialogue between diverse groups. In fact, Nadia points out that this is what online spaces should be used for -- bringing together people who would NOT normally be talking to one another. That is exactly what Nadia's project to initiate dialogue between Moroccan youth and politicians strives to accomplish. Nadia explains, "We are bringing politicians to social media where all the Moroccan youth are. This would create more dialogue, a sense of accountability...for me it is working for more democracy."

Another such project is the Global Partners in Education project being coordinated by East Carolina University. It is this project that Shahla participates in as a lead teacher of her university in Pakistan. The initiative was launched in 2003 to provide opportunities for university students to connect and collaborate with students around the world. Over 40 universities and annually over 1500 students now participate in the project. The participating students connect and engage in dialogue with their counterparts from universities around the world through Internet-based chat, video conferencing, and email. This project also gives opportunities to

university teachers like Shahla to have conversations with teachers around the world on global issues, intercultural understanding, and pedagogy. Shahla thinks that sometimes people do not know non-offending ways of communication and projects like Global Understanding can train students to communicate across cultural differences.

The third example is moderated dialogue conducted by online organizations like Soliya and Peace x Peace. These organizations use the Internet to bring together youth or women from Western societies and Arab Muslim societies and facilitate dialogue for creating cross-cultural understanding. Aya has volunteered as moderator in such dialogues and emphatically argues that such dialogues do change people's perceptions about each other and can contribute to peace building.

Moderated formal dialogue may control incivility and bullying online, and mostly include participants who reveal their full identities, but that does not mean it is without challenge. When we advocate for equally respecting all cultural practices there is the risk of extreme cultural relativism that might lead to apathy towards victims of human rights abuses in various cultures. Harris (2004, p.137) points out another problem with the managed forums of political participation for youth that, because of supervision and sanctions, their participation may become "the performance of engagement rather than engagement itself." Harris questions whether such managed programs hijack the agenda from young people and make them mouthpieces for the organization that conducts the dialogue. A good question to ask while evaluating and designing formal initiatives for dialogue is: Can people really say what they want on these platforms or they are forced to only voice certain acceptable ideas in acceptable language?

Coleman & Blumler (2009, p. 9-10) point out that the Internet has the potential for democratic participation but it cannot be realized without proper infrastructure. They propose

online civic commons where citizens can have dialogue among themselves and also with institutions of governance at all levels. Designing interactive online spaces and managing them, however, requires skills and resources. Besides, designing great online spaces certainly does not make them democratic. My observation of managed online initiatives by global institutions like UNICEF and the World Bank has also alerted me to fact that though these platforms open opportunities for participation in countries from the global North as well as global South; when it comes to the global South, it is predominantly the privileged, English educated, and urban youth from these countries who use these opportunities. Others either do not know these opportunities exist, or when they do, they do not have the money, technological access, training, or language skills to participate in these global public spaces.

Dahlgren (2006) has rightly pointed out that in a thriving democracy there will always be conflict and there will always be a shifting of we-they boundaries. He sees difference as central to democracy, as does Mouffe (2005). That makes it all the more important for citizens to learn to live with this tension, and engage in open deliberation and dialogue without expecting easy consensus. Amitai Etzioni proposes the term “megalogue” to denote mass dialogues over what is right and wrong. According to him, “Megalogues involve millions of members of a society exchanging views with one another at workplaces, during family gatherings, in the media, and at public events. They are often contentious and passionate, and, while they have no clear beginning or endpoint, they tend to lead to changes in a society's culture and its members’ behavior” (Etzioni, 2013). Online spaces have great potential to become spaces for megalogue at the global level and hence remain an important dimension of global civic culture.

The analysis of the four communicative action based dimensions of the transcultural citizenship shows that my participants experience transcultural citizenship in culturally-rooted

ways and that global engagement strengthens, rather than weakens, their local civic work. Thanks to the affordances provided by the Internet, my participants are able to express their voices, form connections both to individual global counterparts and to large, transnational networks. These connections, in turn, facilitate friendships, coalitions, and collective action across borders. The women in my study make use of these intercultural connections to engage in dialogue with one another, to feel and express solidarity, to promote a larger reach of their local work, and to achieve transnational resonance of local or personal issues. Such diverse activities encourage critical thinking about local/national cultures and practices and resonate with the relational, discursive, and affective approach my participants use for articulating citizenship and civic engagement.

CHAPTER 7: DOING TRANSCULTURAL CITIZENSHIP—ACTION AND EFFICACY

Action/efficacy is the seventh and final dimension of the online transcultural citizenship framework. This chapter examines online action and the resulting sense of civic agency and efficacy. In the dominant discourse on citizenship and civic engagement, the dimension of action and the resulting sense of civic efficacy are the ultimate tests of whether a civic culture is serving its purpose. Slimbach (2005), for example, points out that it is good to know about the world but what you do in the world is more important. When we apply this critique to my project, we can say, it is great that the Internet plays a role in shaping civic identities and values and facilitates networking, dialogue, expression, and information sharing, but ultimately, can citizens really take “action” online and do these online actions make any real difference in the world? Efficacy of online action is therefore the litmus test for whether or not the Internet to be considered a legitimate contributor to civic participation.

Online action remains one of the most contentious dimensions associated with digital civic engagement because of the lack of consensus over how action should be defined and what should or should not be considered “real” action. Online activism is often treated as an inferior kind of civic engagement and derided as “clicktivism,” “slacktivism,” or “arm-chair activism.” The women in my study acknowledge the challenges posed by online action but still consider it a significant component of their total citizenship experience and a predominant factor in their global engagement. Most of them also claim that they experience civic agency and efficacy through online action. In this section, I examine why these women consider the Internet an important tool as well as a space for civic action.

In Chapter Three, I discussed how my participants defined citizenship broadly, going beyond the conventional notions of voting, paying taxes, and being loyal to one’s country. These

women also define civic action in a much broader way than we conventionally do and therefore, as with citizenship, consider a range of online activities legitimate civic activities. Following are some of the online activities that my participants engage in and recognize as civic action. They also argue that these actions have an offline impact and lead to social change.

Creating Awareness through Sharing (Information, Images, Slogans, Articles, Videos) and Writing

My participants consider awareness creation an important civic action. Gulab and Sania's social justice-oriented critical work on Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr falls into this category. Andrea's work on climate change and also Laura and Yohana's writing on Global Voices Online are examples where discursive acts are seen as civic action.

Florence from Namibia explains how she uses her Facebook pages to reach out to young women with information on LGBTQ rights and women's rights and also to sensitise women about sexual and reproductive rights. According to Florence, the clarity of perspective these communication acts bring to the participants, the awareness about different choices they create, and the community they build are all legitimate examples of social change.

Valerie from the U.S. works for the National Association of the Mothers' Centers. Valerie gives an example of the story about a woman professor in the U.S. nursing her sick baby while she was giving a lecture. Valerie wrote a blog post about this incident. She points out that even when it was a local (or even national) issue to begin with, by addressing it from the point-of-view of the larger gender or mother's issue on her blog, she is performing an important civic role that might have a transnational reach. Valerie argues, "I am not trying to say if that mother was right or wrong, but rather, [I am] drawing attention to the fact that people have children and also work, and that childcare is inadequate and that it is an issue that most people

have.” She continues, “I feel more influence when I write and when I write on line I am more persuasive.” Here, expression and action become synonymous for Valerie.

From one perspective, writing can be seen as a symbolic act, so can Valerie’s online work count as civic action? Her online writing touches people’s lives and also gradually brings gender and work-life balance issues to a public agenda, helps women come together around a common issue, and also from time-to-time may impact policy in America and elsewhere. These effects of her online action meet the criteria we use to qualify an offline action as “civic.”

Encouraging Critical Thinking

Some of my participants like Sania, Gulab, Cristina, Yohana, and Laura believe that critical thinking is the most significant quality of a good citizen, both locally and globally. They argue that if their online work encourages others to think outside the box, questions hegemonic practices and privilege, and challenges oppressive governments and markets, it is an important contribution to democratic practice. Gwenn, for example, uses social media for this purpose. Gwenn argues that educating people is the most important kind of civic action and she does that through social media among many other media, like radio and face-to-face dialogue.

Provoking critical thinking online is Gulab’s chosen path of action and one of her favorite ways to do this is tweet. She tweets radical poetry, provoking questions, images of book jackets, and retweets what she thinks is important. Even when Gulab, an India-American DIY activist, refuses to accept the concept of citizenship and also denies identifying herself as a global citizen or citizen of any country, she does find her online participation meaningful in her relationship to fellow humans. She says, “Through Tumblr and Twitter I have met a lot of people, and a lot of these people I have mentored in terms of giving them advice... not only like how to get through college or high school but also to start asking questions about themselves... and thinking about

our complacency to all this exploiting systems around us.” The warm response she gets from her Twitter community gives her a sense of efficacy. She says, “...a lot of people tell me, Gulab, thank you so much for sharing what you share. What you do has profoundly impacted me so I know that...though I might not be starting riots or protests or anything like that I know that the things I have posted on Tumblr and Twitter have impacted people.” Here we clearly have a sense of efficacy and agency produced through online discursive action. Sania, a Pakistani-American freelance writer argues, “As long as you think critically and use your voice for justice it is activism.” For Sania, online spaces are valid spaces to use one’s voice and therefore, valid spaces for activism.

Shahla (through her work as a teacher on the virtual course on global understanding), Nadia (as a project leader who initiates dialogue between Moroccan youth and politicians), and Aya (as a moderator of dialogue between Arab-Muslim and American youth) strongly believe that online dialogue encourages critical thinking about one’s own practices and cultures and helps to resolve conflicts. They see this as an important step towards peace building. According to these women, if we consider peacebuilding a legitimate part of global democratization, peace building activities online have to be recognized as legitimate democratic action.

Advocacy

Most of my participants mention advocacy when speaking about the civic roles they play online. As we discussed earlier in Chapter Five an important trait that my participants possess and that sets them apart from their peers is the willingness and courage to act on their convictions even when it goes against the grain. All the women in my study are passionate about the causes they support be it animal rights, women’s rights, Internet governance, or environment. Internet, with its ease of self-publishing and access to national and global issue-based

communities supports these women's passion to advocate for the causes they believe in. Of course, it is most likely that they would have carried out their advocacy even without the Internet but the Internet changes the scale and frequency of how often and how far their efforts reach. Advocacy online is done through blogs, civic websites, and social media like Facebook and Twitter, and is targeted towards politicians, policy makers as well as the larger public. Gwenn from Zimbabwe, for example, routinely advocates to government and policy makers and uses social media as an important tool for advocacy on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. Graciela from Brazil is part of several policy initiatives and other organizations online. For example, she is on the board of directors for Association for Progressive Communication, an Internet based global community that works to secure free and open Internet for everyone. She is also active in Internet Governance Forum and a member of the advisory group, a multi stake project advisory board held by the UN. Thus Graciela's advocacy work has global repercussions. My participants recognise that advocacy can make significant contribution to social change by influencing policy, changing attitudes, and mobilizing resources. Florence and Gwenn point out there are very often offline programs associated with online advocacy. Since much of these women's advocacy work is carried out online, the Internet again becomes a valuable tool in civic action for them.

Mobilization

Women in my study who are in leadership positions use online spaces for mobilization and consider mobilization a civic action. They have long realized that group civic action has an impact that an individual action does not, so they fully appreciate and use the Internet's affordance of many-to-many communication at low transaction cost and its unprecedented speed for spreading messages. Florence, for example, regularly uses her many Facebook pages and

other websites for mobilizing participants for local offline events like workshops, campaigns, and film screenings in Namibia. Olfa uses youth websites like Y-Peer to mobilize youth volunteers and peers to combat HIV/AIDS, and Cristina frequently uses Facebook to mobilise participation in gender justice programs in Romania. While I was conducting the interviews, Gwenn mobilized her peers to participate in ‘sixteen-day-of-activism’ against gender violence and later organised a campaign to wear black on Valentine’s Day to protest gender-based violence. She used Facebook, email, her blog, and Skype, along with other offline approaches to do so.

In many instances, offline civic events like marches, protests, exhibitions, and workshops benefit from the reach and speed the Internet provides for publicising the event. In such situations, the affordance of the Internet for many-to-many communication is an unprecedented advantage. The Internet is also an efficient tool for civic leaders as well as organizations to give visibility to their efforts. When organizations publicize an event on social media, it is a good opportunity to also showcase their organization’s work and spread awareness about the issues even when all the people reached online do not actually attend the offline event.

As online advocacy and mobilization often have direct positive contributions to offline action, most civic initiatives do not separate these two dimensions, but rather use them synergistically. For example, Ginger’s online advocacy through her website music4haiti.org, combined with her offline music concerts, raised funds for Haiti and helped build schools and an orphanage there. “We got a wonderful following on Facebook and they spread a word about our concerts,” recalls Ginger, a physical and Yoga therapist from the U.S.. Gwenn says that her online health messages strengthen offline use of health services in Zimbabwe. Saumya did her internship at Women for Women International in Washington D.C. She narrates how the

organization used online action and engagement towards changing the lives of women in several parts of the world: “[E]verything was through the Internet...The program that we were trying to communicate the most with our audience was a program where women can sign up and they can give twenty or thirty dollars per month. They point out where actually that money will go...for example, to my sponsor sister in Rwanda, Afghanistan...it was powerful to see that somebody on the Internet can go to our website and literally change the life of woman somewhere else.”

These examples show that online mobilization, when combined with offline work, can have considerable impact on social change.

Supporting Other Activists

Not all my participants see themselves as “activists” and several women in my study who see themselves as activists also admit a feeling of burn-out from time to time, causing them to withdraw from direct action. Laura, a Venezuelan woman pursuing her Ph.D. in Paris, however, emphatically points out that supporting other activists is also practicing citizenship” Laura says, “I don’t feel ‘activist’ myself. I work with them.” Laura also donates to organizations like Doctors without Borders and Action against Hunger.

Ginger and Valerie have supported each other’s advocacy work for years now. As Graciela points out, the Internet offers many spaces and opportunities through civic communities and social media for these women to show solidarity and “be present for others.” Strategies and resources are shared freely online as well as questions and requests for support. Florence points to the ease of sharing information and strategies online, which without the Internet would have cost a fortune, considerably more time, and still would have had a limited reach. In fact, the cost of information sharing is one of the reasons why the flow of information from the global South to the global North has been extremely limited. We cannot say there is a balance now in the flow

online, but as demonstrated by my participants from the global South, we certainly see more South-to-North flow via the Internet. Even when we concede the point that these online voices are mostly privileged and do not represent the masses in the global South, at one point even these few voices did not have a chance for expression. My participants also claim that the Internet has also made possible more South-to-South interaction, solidarity, and collaboration.

The support to other activists could also be symbolic. My participants argue that commenting on what other people share is also a way of supporting their engagement and several women, like Ginger, Andrea, Febi, Olfa and Florence, make sure they comment on their colleagues' postings to keep their morale high.

Most women in my study take action in several different ways as described in the categories above. Olfa, for example, describes several ways she "acts" online -- one, political advocating about HIV/AIDS; two, educating about reproductive health; three, raising awareness on these topics; and four, supporting her peers' work. She considers all four as a form of enacting citizenship. In fact, it is a unique feature of online communities that they allow members the flexibility to participate in the ways that suit them the best. Introverted women like Saumya, for example, may find the discursive online approach to action more suitable to their personalities. She explains, "I am a shy person [and] it is easier to just stay at my desk and send an email."

The easy-entry-easy-exit in online communities is at times considered a weakness and is seen as a sign of a lack of commitment on the part of members. When Yohana a journalist, blogger, and social media consultant from Brazil, however, first approached Global Voices Online for volunteering, she was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to find entry into that particular community. Yohana sees this as a positive aspect of online communities. Besides,

most stable online communities have a steady core group of members supported by a larger peripheral group for whom the ease of joining and experiencing civic agency is a big draw in terms of choosing the online option of civic engagement. As Aya and Valerie point out, without this option, these peripheral members would most likely not participate in civic activities at all. Most successful online communities have certain core members who take on more demanding and complicated actions, like submitting petitions to the appropriate authority, organizing events and campaigns, or acting as a spokesperson for the community. Meanwhile, there are numerous members on the periphery that may come and go, but they engage mainly in comparatively less demanding activities like sharing information, signing petitions, endorsing campaigns, etc. These peripheral members, however, fuel the actions of the core members. Before the Internet, full-time activists had little opportunity to connect with people who sympathised with their cause but were not active participants in the protest.

Aya recognises peripheral online action as valuable for democracy. She argues, I am a member of [avaaz](#), [change.org](#), and [credoaction](#)... I mean if democracy means that civil society is engaged in decision making process then I don't think what is better than these Internet and social media platforms for democracy because people are able to voice their opinion, people are able to sign petitions for things that they didn't even know that existed, they read, they learn about it's importance and they sign. Where else, when else and who else would tell them this and how else would they have time to go and find somebody who is running a petition and sign it physically?

Like Aya, several other participants argued that Internet based civic participation is a value addition to the options we already had before the Internet. The Internet has not taken away

anything that we already had but has rather given us an additional option to engage civically in whatever capacity we can.

Differentiating between Symbolic and Direct Action

Much online action-- activities like initiating petitions and submitting them, lobbying governments and politicians, fundraising for causes, and organizing events for example-- is very similar to offline action in its outcome. Then, there is supportive action like donating and signing petitions initiated by others. What is different here is the speed and the scale that Internet brings to these already familiar types of action.

There is another type of action online, however, that has spurred heated debates about its legitimacy. The most contentious form of online action is the purely discursive or symbolic action such as liking, sharing, and displaying one's ideology as a social media status or cover photo on social media. One reason for this contention is that some online activities defy strict labeling in the vocabulary borrowed from the offline experience familiar to us. This is the type of action that triggers criticism of online action as slacktivism, clicktivism, or arm-chair activism, where one doesn't have to leave their chair to participate in "real" action. Cristina calls it "passive" action but the question remains: can action ever be passive? Does this kind of symbolic action merit the same weight as concrete action or what some people call "real" action?

Most of my participants claim that symbolic action counts as civic action because it plays an important role in citizenship experience. Symbolic action keeps civic interests and passions alive, and if we consider citizenship as also being a state of mind, symbolic action plays an important role in sustaining this state of mind. Helen, for example, says her involvement can be considered active "if liking a page on Facebook counts, and reading an update counts." Most of Helen's online action is symbolic; for example, sharing pictures, clicking to sign online petitions,

reading and liking updates from websites like Animal Liberation Foundation and PETA or their Facebook pages, forwarding links and pictures to her friends, etc. But such online engagement keeps her interest and passion alive in the absence of any other such offline opportunities in her geographic proximity. These symbolic activities help Helen to experience a civic identity as someone who deeply cares about animal welfare. Helen also expects that her present symbolic engagement will lead to a more active global, civic role later in life. Additionally, Helen is an active member of her school based “Green Group,” an offline community working on issues of environmental conservation, which shows that her online activities are not weakening her offline civic engagement.

Again, it is symbolic action that sustains online communities through constant communication about shared beliefs and values of the community. In Chapter Three, while discussing how horizontal communication plays a role in non-institutional practices and beliefs, Howard (2011) demonstrates how this kind of community emerges in individual acts of communication. His arguments apply to online global civic communities because these communities work as communication enclaves where participants can meet like-minded people and nurture their civic values and beliefs in their supportive company.

Concerns around Online Action

The above discussion shows that my participants consider online action, including purely symbolic or discursive action, as legitimate civic action and see the many benefits of such action. These women, however, are not cyber-utopians; they value the contribution of offline and local engagement, understand the limitations of online action, and also express serious concerns over its misuse. They also understand that it is easy to share information online and engage in discussion but collective action demands much more involvement.

Graciela, for example, has given much thought to the slacktivism issue and has formulated a thoughtful response about when online activism works and when it does not. She explains, “You can do good campaigns online if you know how to do it. I am not talking about Avaaz and Facebook here, I am talking about really engaging people...with a good campaign strategy, a good team working with you, and a solid strategic plan you can do good campaigning online with less money you would need offline using several tools and spaces...I think it works.”

When I ask Graciela why she is critical of Avaaz and Facebook she says, “It is the issue of legitimacy...you can not do that just having tools to distribute short messages and ask people to click somewhere. You have to have the background, you have to have the knowledge, you have to have a complex understanding of politics, relations behind online action...just sending messages doesn’t do anything(...).” Graciela asks several questions of online campaign organizers: “How they are going to follow up, how do you know what the impact was, what happened afterwards?” Graciela emphatically states that even though she is active online and has been working on issues regarding Internet governance for years, she is the most critical person when it comes to clicktivism. “I am not optimistic about it,” she says assertively.

Gwenn shares her views about the need for complementary relationships between online and offline action: “The criticism [about slacktivism] is all true but the important thing is what complementary action you are taking. You have people that send out messages but after they are done, as soon as they walk out of the door, they are doing the same thing they are speaking against. You need to practice what you preach. That’s why passion is very important(...).” For those starting online campaigns, Gwenn suggests two important follow up actions: first, the leaders should be transparent about the progress of their campaign with frequent online updates to contributors, and second, they should take inputs from the grassroots people.

Aya gives an example of a recent Twitter chat hosted by a UN agency and observes that when organizations like the UN attempt to engage people online in a superficial manner due to the idea that “the Internet is there so we are going to use it,” people don’t get anything out of it. Aya observes that in the UN chat she witnessed, the hosts had not given enough deep thought to the answers that they were providing, and it appeared to her as if they were engaging in it just as one more activity to showcase in their organizational profile. Yohana echoes Aya’s sentiments when she says, “The problem is with people, not the Internet.” In several conversations around this topic of effectiveness, my participants like Aya, Yohana, Ginger, and Gwenn stressed again and again that it was ultimately the motive of the leaders and the quality of the people participating that makes an online initiative a success or a failure. Again, it is important to note that this is not that different from offline initiatives.

Not all my participants agree with this clicktivism critique. Valerie recognises the implications of online action for public policy and public perception and emphatically opposes the clicktivism charges. She says, “I disagree with that [the critique of clicktivism] because, first of all, I think it was instrumental in getting President Obama elected. It was instrumental in getting Planned Parenthood to reverse a very popular position six months ago and there are many similar situations...I would not demean it as clicktivism.” Aya too has strong faith in the power of online petitions. Besides, for reflective women like Katerina, an international consultant from Kazakhstan for combating human trafficking, even symbolic action does not happen casually. She says, “My participation online is very limited. I can only express opinion...or vote for something if I believe my voting would really make a difference.” She gives an example of voting online “to save an Iranian woman from stoning for death.” Katerina claims, “To participate in such activities I need to be sure this will work exactly for the purpose I consider to be acceptable and

clear. If I am not sure how my vote/opinion sharing will be used, I would avoid the activity.”

Thus, symbolic online action does not happen casually for reflective participants. Women like my participants find it meaningful when they engage in it because they invest much emotion, thought, and energy into it.

My participants also clearly differentiate between the types of issues that can be resolved by local offline action and those that need global mobilization (that is mostly online). Andrea, for example, narrates an incident showing efficacy of local offline action that saved a park from destruction in her Mexican city. She, however, points out several instances when online petitions have helped a lot, for example the 1994 resistance movement in Mexico in support of the indigenous communities and also the protests against corrupt practices around gold and silver mines in Mexico. “It was only because of international intervention that was mostly online that we could stop it,” she says. Katerina points out the legitimate functions of global websites:

They are good because they gather people from all over the world. They are always better than national-based communities for discussions and immediate actions. They are less powerful when a locally specific issue is to be solved. For instance, only locals can discuss how it would be better to make a watering system in a local park. Global community can only provide some examples in this case, and advice, and locals could take these advices into account or reject them.

Sustaining the motivation for engagement and action is one of the most challenging parts of being a citizen. This is true of online engagement even if the Internet has made participation easier for those equipped digitally. The women in my study confess to have experienced this challenge even with all the passion they feel about the issues that they support. When one is not a

full-time activist, citizenship demands compete with other life demands. Several participants confess to going through alternate phases of signing a lot of petitions and ignoring most petitions. Aya, for example, was completing her master's dissertation when I interviewed her and she admitted to getting overwhelmed by the number of petitions she gets in her inbox everyday. She says, "Some weeks I don't sign any [laughs] because I get so many emails and I always feel bad when I don't, and then I try to sign as many as possible because a lot of them are compelling."

Most of my participants have a realistic view and reasonable expectations from their online participation. They claim that there is a sense of fulfilment that comes with taking action online but at the same time, several women, especially the connectors and the seekers, express a desire, a wishful thinking that they could do more, that they could participate in more offline action, and they could be more global in their reach. Technically speaking, every webpage can have a global audience, but this does not always occur in reality. Valerie recognises that even when she calls herself a global citizen and her online work has the potential to have a global reach, in reality her impact is more local -- beginning with her family and friends, and at the most achieving a national level. She admits, "A person like Hillary Clinton can do something for women around the world, she is in position...when I say I am a global citizen it is my moral obligation to the family of humankind and my particular connection with women around the world...But I don't know if I am in position to do much for them. I mean, digitally I am not going to have the following around the world as I have in the United States (...)."

Aya and Graciela also speak at length about the risks of surveillance of online activities, and Florence vents her frustrations about the anti-LGBTQ atmosphere in Africa. We have recently witnessed increasing crackdown on social media use by activists in several different

parts of the world and many governments regularly monitor and censor the social media use of even non-activists. Morozov (2011) points out that oppressive regimens are becoming more and more media savvy in their use of the new technologies for surveillance and identification of protesters. On the whole, my participants have not faced any direct crackdown on their online activities. One reason could be that they are not in direct confrontation with political powers. Their civic work and mobilization falls in the so-called “soft” areas of education, health, awareness creation, and advocacy.

The discussion so far has shown that if we define action broadly, the way my participants do, civic action online has a positive effect even when the impact is limited and the process is fraught with challenges. My participants claim that they experience agency and a sense of efficacy through online action. Aya poses some pertinent questions to argue that the issues we raise about clicktivism have always been present with action offline: “Does it always lead to change when people do things in person? When Americans go to the polls to vote are they understanding who or what they are voting for? Is it so that you are reflective when you vote in person and not reflective when you sign a petition online?” My question is if we are judging online action more harshly as compared to offline action because it is unfamiliar and involves technology, of which people tend to be skeptical, even fearful?

My argument is that even though collective action is challenging online and even when clicktivism takes place in the privacy of one’s bedroom, it is not “private” action as proposed by Papacharissi (2010) or “solo” action as proposed by Dahlgren (2011). If we follow Dewey’s classic argument about what differentiates public from private (1927, 1954), action online is still a conjoint action even when taken in privacy. Dewey argues that,

Consequences of human acts are of two kinds, those which affect the persons directly

engaged in a transaction, and those which affect others beyond those immediately concerned. In this distinction we find the germ of the distinction between the private and the public...When the consequences of an action are confined, or are thought to be confined, mainly to the persons directly engaged in it, the transaction is a private one...Yet if it is found that the consequences of conversation extend beyond the two directly concerned, that they affect the welfare of many others, the act acquires a public capacity (p.12).

Online collective action has a different form: one can take action online from the privacy of one's bedroom, in an online space that might not be completely public or civic in its purpose, and without the physical presence of other members of the group. I argue, however, that even when taken in privacy of the home, online civic action is public because it has larger consequences. Febi, for example, rightly points out, "Many people now work from home, doing business from online media to make money, so it is possible to do citizenship from home."

Dahlgren (2006, p.273), citing Stewart (2000) argues for the necessity of "communicative civic competencies" that will enable citizens to make use of the bursts of democratic activity and empower them." My study shows that online civic participation shapes these competencies and keeps them honed through the day-to-day, small communicative gestures of a civic nature. I endorse Dahlgren's view that "[c]itizenship is, in part, a question of learning by doing." Can these online global civic communities be good learning spaces for global democratic participation? Yes and no. On the positive side, these communities can reinforce certain kind of civic values, especially those supported by the ethic of care and give opportunities to connect with like minded fellow citizens. On the other, they may shield the participants from the world

out there that is harsher, more conflict-ridden, antagonistic, and not always fair. Limiting one's interactions to the online global civic communities may give a false satisfaction of agency and a heightened civic identity that does not reflect the realities.

Considering all of these limitations, I still agree with Shirky's (2008) view that the Internet has provided people a third option between institutional action and no action. Yohana and Valerie's words echo Shirky's observation. Yohana argues that it is better to do something from your couch than to do nothing. Valerie's words sum up the argument in support of online action as a value-addition to the experience of civic participation: "[I]t has not taken anything away from something else. So if people don't do it on computer they will not be doing it at all...online action does not replace anything. It brought something new in the realm of possibilities!"

My analysis in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven shows that for my participants, the expansion of resources and the support of a global community outweigh the potential risks associated with engaging online. Several participants raised concerns about incivility, threats to privacy and security, and surveillance, as well as unwanted sexual attention that make online engagement challenging. They have, however, realized that with sufficient caution, the benefits of their online civic engagement surpass the limitations and therefore, have chosen to remain active online. My participants find online engagement fulfilling because they invest time, energy, and emotions in their online engagement, and have given careful thought to conditions under which online global engagement can prove effective. According to these women, commitment and the deep knowledge of the context are two predominantly important conditions for online civic action to be effective.

The empirical data also show that women take several different pathways to becoming

civic, digital, and global that reflect their micro and macro lifeworlds. Across the seven dimensions of the analytic framework I have developed (identity, value, information/knowledge, connection/network, expression, dialogue, and action/efficacy), I would like to suggest three main categories for understanding women's participation in online communities. These categories help us challenge the notion of all online engagement being little more than "clicktivism" and see, instead, more meaningful, more diverse, and more nuanced roles for the members of online communities.

Leaders and Mobilizers

(Florence, Graciela, Gwenn, Aya, Valrie, Ginger, Cristina, Olfa, Katerina)

I have several women in my study who are leaders in non-profits or movements. Women in this category have already decided what issues they are passionate about. For example, there are Ginger and Valerie from the U.S. who work on women's health and mothers' rights, respectively, Cristina from Romania who works on domestic abuse, Gwen from Zimbabwe and Olfa from Tunisia working on HIV/AIDS, Katerina from Kazakhstan working on combating human trafficking, and Graciela from Brazil working on Internet governance. Their civic interests have local roots and they are intimately aware of the local contexts. The civic and the professional often converge in their cases. They actively express themselves online on different platforms and use social media extensively even when they are aware of the risks. Besides peers and general public, policy makers are an important target for their online activities. They have found strong bonds in virtual communities and they also travel much. Because these women have strong offline networks, their online work receives more attention and responses.

Intercultural Connectors, Critical Communicators, and Peace Builders

(Andrea, Laura, Yohana, Sania, Gulab, Aya, Nadia, Shahla)

Women in this ideal type use their superior communication skills to create intercultural understanding. They are interested in peace building, conflict resolution, and cross-border dialogue. They are active on platforms like Global Voices Online, news sites, blogs, and online publications where they write on a range of issues like gender, climate change, immigration, and culture. They write about their own countries, communities, and cultures (e.g., Yohana on Brazil, Laura on Venezuela, Nadia on Morocco, Aya and Sania on Muslim women) to influence the global information imbalance that leans in favor of the global North and also to promote intercultural understanding. At the same time, they spread awareness about various international issues. They love their own countries, have intimate knowledge of their customs, culture, political situation, and social issues, but they are not blindly nationalistic. When necessary, these women do not hesitate to write critically about their own countries. They aspire to learn from other cultures. Several of these women have had a bicultural upbringing and have lived in countries other than their origin either as immigrants or international students.

Information and Personal Fulfillment Seekers

(Helen, Saumya, Mayang, Febi, Raji, Rola, Petronella)

Women in this category are dedicated receivers of information on global civic issues and cultures. They receive more online from a variety of sources than they express, but there is a clear aspiration to expand civic activities at the global level. They also show leanings towards certain issues, for example: Helen from South Africa for animal rights; Saumya, an Indian American woman for gender and international development; Petronella, a Namibian woman living in Angola for human rights. They are, however, open to exploring other issues. When they

write, it is mostly for friends and peer group. Most experience some kind of limitations at this stage to being fully active global citizens; for example, financial dependence, age, school schedules, lack of mobility, or not enough confidence in their own knowledge of the issues. They love to travel and meet new people. They are open-minded towards other cultures and critically evaluate their own, and yet, they also see themselves as representatives/ambassadors of their own countries and cultures.

These again are certainly not airtight compartments. In some cases, you see an overlap of modes; for example, Aya falls into the categories of leaders and also peace builders. Katerina and especially Gulab are difficult to place in a single category. For everyone, there is a shift from one role to another from time to time.

These three different categories show that there are many different ways to engage in online civic engagement and the kind of spaces that fulfill the needs of different ideal types may be different. Leaders, for example, need spaces that provide them with opportunities to collaborate transnationally, raise resources, and engage in collective action, while the connectors would benefit from online communities that have mechanisms for encouraging one-on-one or group dialogue, or for hosting and promoting individual blogs. The seekers are looking for spaces that are easy to join and provide mentoring, education, and safe spaces to experiment with the expression of global civic identities and friendship.

Despite these differences in citizenship practices, transcultural citizenship is characterised by a deep desire to connect with fellow human beings irrespective of geographic borders or ethnic/cultural differences, as well as a strong belief in playing a role in making the world a better, more just, and peaceful place.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Citizenship is a concept that is at once universal and situated; constant yet dynamic. Global citizenship and digital citizenship are two concepts that reflect the realities of late-modern and postmodern societies -- and these are both hugely influenced by globalization and digital media, especially the Internet. Both of these concepts have given rise to a debate in the scholarly field about their feasibility and desirability, and there exists a rift between those who celebrate these reconfigured notions of citizenship and those who are skeptical about their larger impact. My study is located at the intersection of global and digital citizenships and my findings contribute to this ongoing debate by introducing the concept of transcultural citizenship, and through providing much-needed empirical data from different parts of the world to complement the theoretical and moral deliberations on the subject.

My empirical study raises hope for a realistic and cautious optimism about the Internet's role in the experience of citizenship that reflects the changing times. The skeptics point to the global realities that are far from ideal and to the limitations of the Internet in support of their skepticism about global and digital citizenships. Critics of global citizenship have argued that the widespread ethnic conflicts, the global power imbalance, the passions aroused by our primordial ties, the desirability of local roots, and the resilience of nationalism provide enough evidence to question the notion of global citizenship. Also important is that in absence of global governance, such a concept remains untenable. Similarly, despite celebratory claims about the democratic nature of the Internet, critics have drawn our attention to digital inequalities, the limited impact of the so called "slacktivism" or arm-chair activism, increasing surveillance, and the commercial control of the Internet to raise questions about the Internet's impact on democratic civic participation. Civic websites that have been specifically designed to use the affordances of the

Internet for collaboration and collective action have also come under fire for their lack of citizen autonomy resulting from their managed nature and their inability to attract those who do not already possess high civic interest.

Although there is some truth in these arguments, my optimism, albeit realistic and cautious, is based on my empirical findings, which suggest the emergence of a global civic subculture that I call transcultural citizenship. The concept of transcultural citizenship is shaped and sustained largely by the Internet. When scholars like Lance Bennett, Ulrich Beck, Nancy Fraser, Lewis Friedland, Nigel Dower, David Held, and Zizi Papacharissi challenge us to rethink our notions of citizenship and the public sphere in order to reflect the changing times, women (and probably other genders too though in this research I have only studied those who self-identified as women) like my participants have grasped the potential of the web 2.0 with its potential of global connectivity, peer-to-peer networks, and user-generated content. Most of these women are not full time activists -- rather, they are students, journalists, health practitioners, mothers, and so on. But they use these affordances to connect and act beyond national borders, experience civic agency, and carve out positive identities for themselves.

My study examines how women's participation in global/transnational civic websites influences their experience of citizenship. The study specifically asks if women feel and act more as global citizens because of their participation in such communities and, if so, how they negotiate their global citizenship as regards their national and local citizenships. My findings show that online civic participation through global civic websites has an amplifying effect on women's civic participation and global orientation.

The study focuses on the Internet's role in this process of negotiation and examines the online and global civic participation as a culturally and geo-politically situated experience.

Instead of just looking at one single activity or one single locality, I pay particular attention to the connections that my participants made across spaces and activities. The study, therefore, falls under the umbrella of multi-sited and translocal ethnography. Murphy & Kraidy (2003, p.3) suggests the term “translocal ethnography” based on Marcus’s (1998) conceptualization of multi-sited ethnography as an approach more suited to contemporary media studies that may require more complex and multi-layered investigations.

My study employed a rather unconventional methodology for an ethnography. I used in-depth interviews (23 women from 15 countries) supplemented by an online survey and textual analysis of online civic participation. The entire study was conducted using new media technologies -- the Internet, Skype, e-mail, instant messaging, chat, and social media like Facebook and Twitter. I hung out with my participants on social media and immersed myself in the global civic websites in which they participate. This gave me a first-hand experience of the affordances and limitations of the Internet for transcultural connection. My experience of working with online data also made me sensitive to some unique ethical and methodological questions that Internet-based research raises; for example, the ephemeral nature of online data combined with the abundance of online expression posed the challenge of capturing the data, while the free sharing of the survey and the fluid nature of identities online raised questions of reliability and validity. The main ethical questions emerged from the contentious issue of whether the individual expression on the civic websites should be considered public or private, and also the impossibility of obtaining an informed consent from all those who participate on such websites. There is no rule of thumb for resolving these ethical dilemmas, but it is important for a researcher to be sensitive to them and find the appropriate resolution that suits her data and participants.

I was specifically interested in women who are civically engaged and digitally active. I treated my participants as the cases of “positive deviance” (see Chapter One for details) because they defy the gender-based discrimination associated with public participation and technology use. Besides, their civic and transcultural use of the Internet set them apart from most users, who use the Internet for commercial and entertainment purposes and for connecting to known friends and family.

My findings show that women take multiple and different pathways to online civic engagement and play different roles on global civic websites. Some of them are leaders and mobilizers, some use their superior communication skills and training for transcultural dialogue and conflict resolution, while some use the Internet to seek global information and make friends from other cultures. Some use the Internet predominantly for civic expression, some for joining global networks and finding opportunities for transnational action, and some for transcultural dialogue. The common element that connects all my participants, however, is that they all define and experience citizenship in a way that goes beyond the conventional concept of voting, paying taxes, and being loyal to one’s own country. Most of them also critique the notion of national citizenship as artificially and arbitrarily imposed.

My participants experience citizenship in relational and affective, by which I mean emotional, ways and through discursive activities. In this sense, although my participants are located in vastly different lifeworlds, their civic values and perceptions are very similar. The ideas and phrases that they used during the interviews in support of their broader notion of citizenship, which goes beyond conventional boundaries and practices, were so similar to each other that I see these women as forming a global civic subculture that is at variance with the dominant culture valorizing electoral participation and nationalism.

All of my participants (except two) self-identified as global citizens and I also started with questions on global citizenship because it is a more familiar term. The review of literature and empirical data, however, directed me to look for an alternative conceptualization and my inductive analysis pointed me to the notion of transcultural citizenship. The framework of transcultural citizenship is relevant today in understanding the transculturality of local cultures worldwide under the influence of globalization and digital technologies that produces ongoing local-global interactions. I argue that transcultural citizenship better explains the emerging subculture that I identified in my study than the more commonly known term global citizenship, and this concept adds to our theoretical understanding of citizenship beyond national borders.

Two of the major contentious issues raised by the critics with respect to global citizenship are: one, that we do not have the appropriate institutions for global governance and, on top of this, it is not even desirable to have one global government because of the high probability of it getting monopolized by a single country or a small group of countries; and two, that being global citizens would make people rootless and that local rootedness is important for individual and social well-being. Transcultural citizenship offers us an alternative way to experience citizenship that reflects our global and convergent lives by resolving these two contentious issues. My study indicates that transcultural citizenship is relational in that it is built or performed in relation with defined others through the process of communication across cultures. Interpersonal relations and cultural experiences are more important here than legal-political institutional governance. Besides, the civic practices of actors like my participants are embedded in their local cultures. They have strong local ties and intimate knowledge about their local cultures. The articulation of transcultural citizenship, however, recognizes that these local cultures are also transcultural because of the constant and complex multi-directional flows of

people, images, information, and goods in the world today.

My participants recognize the pragmatic importance of nation-states for the day-to-day administrative issues of citizenship. Their emotional investment, however, is beyond their national identities. For them, their “human” identity is the most important identity and not their national or ethnic identities. They are willing to invest their energies in transnational collective action if the call for action resonates with their civic values. This de-linking of the administrative from the affective and practice-based dimensions of citizenship makes transcultural citizenship a viable approach to citizenship as it operates alongside national citizenship rather than replacing it. The citizenship practices of my participants compel us to take the note that the global is experienced through local and online participation is in considerable ways connected with offline lifeworlds. This is another foundation of transcultural citizenship.

My study also focuses on digital citizenship. I examine the role of the Internet, specifically of the civic websites in the experience of citizenship. Again, my findings paint an optimistic picture of the potential of the Internet in transcultural and transnational civic engagement despite the several challenges associated with it. My examination of global/transnational civic engagement websites indicates that though the websites differ in the level of use and approach to using the affordances of the Internet, several of these websites use them in the ways that facilitate transcultural citizenship.

The combination of these affordances such as user generated content, transborder networks, many-to-many communication, and the unlimited capacity of the Internet for storing information has the potential to amplify the scale and scope of individual civic engagement. If we look back at the relational, discursive, and affective ways that my participants define citizenship, the Internet can enhance their experience of citizenship because it helps build

relationships across cultures and enhances a feeling of solidarity with fellow human beings globally through sharing, collaborating, and encouraging collective action. Online participation also facilitates dialogue with oneself that is crucial for critical thinking, dialogue with an “us” that is with like-minded peers, and dialogue with a “them” who are culturally and/or ideologically different. All of the three types of dialogue are foundational to transcultural citizenship. Dahlgren (2006, p.274) observes, “Ultimately, democracy resides with citizens who interact with each other and with power-holders of various kinds.” In fact, my analysis shows that the civic websites can and should work more on innovative ways to use the affordances of the Internet fully to encourage citizen-to-citizen intercultural dialogue and interactions between citizens and power holders.

My findings show that most global civic websites are managed and administered by a core stable group of people even when they have a large peripheral membership. The managed nature of most civic websites, especially those designed for young people, has been an issue raised by scholars like Stephen Coleman and Anita Harris. These scholars observe that the managed (and at times adult-controlled) sites treat participants as apprentices, force their own civic agenda on participants, provide readymade projects and activities instead of letting them evolve through an organic process, force a predetermined civic discourse that has no space for alternative discourse, and might pressurize those to participate who may be unwilling to do so for reasons that do not just include apathy. Additionally, these managed civic initiatives ignore the DIY citizenship practices and spaces that may be more appealing to some people. Even when my findings point to the managed nature of civic websites, they show that: one, their managed structures have certain advantages over the DIY communities; and two, those that genuinely welcome and allow user-generated content provide mechanisms for members to influence the

evolution of the community; and three; the emerging role of social media like Facebook and Twitter as civic media provides the much needed DIY component to civic participation.

Several websites like TakingITGlobal, Peace and Collaborative Development Network, and the Harry Potter Alliance emerged out of spontaneous interest and passion of an individual or a small group of people. As they grew, however, some element of management became inevitable for the smooth day-to-day functioning of the website. Managed websites are better able to host global networks; raise human, technological, and financial resources consistently; and can forge better links to governments and policy makers. All kinds of online spaces provide opportunities for expression, but if we are concerned about the public voices reaching those in charge of the governance, then the managed websites are the ones who have more power to do so. On the other hand, the completely DIY or spontaneous online initiatives struggle for long-term survival and global reach.

My findings also show that social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr are being increasingly used for civic work. These media provide the DIY component that the managed websites lack. My data shows the shifting role of the civic websites. They are increasingly used as reliable sources of global information on specific issues and for finding a like-minded global community, while social media are used for one-on-one interactions, group conversations, individual expression, and the sharing of civic content. My study shows the continued importance of managed civic websites as “communication enclaves” where the global civic identities are affirmed and reinforced through global civic discourse, transcultural connections, and transnational action. Social media act as an additional expressive space for civic identities that is conflated with personal and social identity expression. While the global civic websites provide a wider cultural exposure, the social media networks provide a wider ideological

exposure. My study emphasizes that both this exposure is important for developing critical thinking, a crucial attribute of transcultural citizenship.

Implications of My Study

My study compels us to rethink both the concept of global citizenship as it is debated presently, and our understanding of online spaces as spaces for democratic participation. I believe the practices of transcultural citizenship that I have found in my work are substantial, and that the concept is worthy of adding to our conceptual framework.

First of all, transcultural online civic participation helps its members carve out positive identities. If we accept Peter Dahlgren (2000)'s argument that identity is a key to understanding citizenship as a mode of social agency, we have to accept that in order to be able to act as a citizen, it is necessary that one can see oneself as a citizen. Global civic websites and the civic use of social media provide opportunities to develop strong global civic identities that would positively influence citizenship practice. These online communities have an especially empowering role in allowing those with marginalized identities to experience civic agency, as is clearly shown by my study. Besides, critical democracy needs members of global civil society who possess the necessary critical thinking to challenge obsolete practices in the name of citizenship. My study shows that one can achieve a global influence even through culturally and locally rooted work. If citizens change the local practices of discrimination, oppression, and abuse and influence their national legislations to be more sensitive to social justice they can make an important contribution to social justice globally because of the interconnectedness of the world today. Held (2002) argues that cosmopolitan democracy can be achieved by reinvigoration and not the abandonment of the state and has also suggested the notion of "multiple citizenship." Transcultural citizenship indicates presence of multiple citizenships in a

relational way.

Next, the values that global civic website endorse and reinforce, and the core values that individuals like my participants follow resonate with those underlying the feminist philosophy of the ethics of care. These core values are attentiveness, responsibility, responsiveness, love, and empathy. In recent years we have seen a hardening of patriotic sentiments and rising ethnocentrism all over the world, and especially in Western Europe and the United States. The rising economic inequalities are eroding communities and societies. These are disconcerting trends for those who hope for peace and security globally. Thus, transcultural citizenship gives us a way of coming together around a shared sense of justice and empathy rather than around national or ethnic identities. At the risk of sounding utopian or idealist, I would say that we need the values endorsed by the ethics of care in the world, and, further, they are necessary to any robust and even realistic concept of democratic citizenship.

There is a growing realization that we need a global and collective response to global problems like terrorism, climate change, and poverty. Transcultural citizenship provides a way for ordinary individuals to engage in these global endeavors. Even if individual actions are small and at times only symbolic, they play an important role in the experience of agency and public connectedness.

Now I turn to the implications of my study in understanding the role of the Internet, specifically civic websites and social media, in democratic civic participation. My findings show that the Internet plays an important role in facilitating transcultural citizenship but to recognize this role we need to rethink our perception of the form and the purpose of democratic deliberation. The conventional perception of civic deliberation sees it in a form that is formal, rational, and in long text prose. Also, civic deliberation takes place at a specific time and place

assigned for it. Online civic deliberation is multi-modal (text, pictures, videos, sound), often informal or semi-formal, and emotionally charged. Online civic discourse is also non-linear and fragmented and much of what happens during the discourse is not visible, at least immediately.

People read, make mental notes, introspect, and build or change opinions in the privacy of their homes. They may in some cases show a small gesture such as “liking” a post and some other times they may share the post on other platforms, such as another website, Twitter, or Facebook. They may use the ideas in the post in their own blog may be. The original author of the content may be totally unaware of the places where this post travels (as happened to my online survey). A debate may or may not take place on these new platforms in which the original author may or may not participate. For example, I may post a comment or an article on my Facebook page and nothing happens except that a friend shares it on her Facebook page. It is quite likely that the debate takes place on her Facebook page and not mine. Thus, deliberation does take place but it is multimodal, multi-sited, linear, fragmented, and full of invisible connections. The second characteristic is that online citizenship rarely happens in exclusive time and space. There is a conflation of the civic or public, social, and private as well as of global and local identities on social media.

Again, in the conventional notion of deliberative democracy reaching a consensus through rational and informed arguments is the primary purpose of deliberation. My textual analysis of the participation on civic websites and social media indicate that these spaces encourage expression of opinion, emotions, and conversations, but not consensus. Does this kind of deliberation matter? Yes, because it serves important functions. Mouffe argues that “the belief in the possibility of a universal rational consensus has put democratic thinking on the wrong track” (2005, p.3). Instead, she argues for the creation of a vibrant “agonistic” public sphere of

contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted. The online participation of my participants suggests that with the right policies and civic and media education, the civic websites and even social media can provide spaces for agonistic engagement.

My findings also show that even when all people do on the Internet is talk, the “talk” serves an important function. Internet-based communities are spaces where individuals can articulate and make visible personal stories of oppression and resistance, and when multiple individual stories come together, they illuminate the structural dimensions and hidden power structures underlying the problem. This is visible in the civic work of my participants based on gender identity, LGBTQ identity, and motherhood. Unless individual women connect their personal experiences to structural and cultural discrimination they cannot take conjoint action and that is the work they do through online communities. Internet-based talk resonates with Etzioni’s (1996) notion of “megalogue” -- a society wide dialogue that links communities -- and such dialogues are at the core of global democracy.

John Dewey emphasizes the shared problems and conjoint action present in the formation of a public. The question is: when does a problem become a shared problem? In the case of most women, the boundaries between private issues and public issues have always been problematic. While work-life balance has been conventionally pushed into the private sphere as something the couple or the woman has to resolve instead of resolving it through family-friendly public policies, matters like abortion, fertility, and sexuality, which essentially are all private issues -- have surfaced as hot public issues. Social media and civic websites have provided spaces where women can bring the so-called private issues to public attention and push for them to be considered as “shared problems” while also mounting a collective struggle to protect the

issues of fertility and sexuality as essentially private.

My data show that online civic participation shapes civic interest and civic identities. This observation is important because previous research (Levine and Lopez, 2004; Livingstone, 2009; Zhou, 2008) has indicated that civic websites only attract those who already have high civic interest and fail to inspire civic interest in those not civically interested. To an extent, my data endorse the previous research because the majority of my interview participants had high civic interest that was mostly developed before they became civically active online. My study, however, also shows that some of my participants serendipitously found civic websites while online and their digital experience did encourage civic participation and shaped their civic interest. In the case of some of my participants, online civic participation formed new empowering identities like advocate, mentor, and blogger, and was especially helpful to those women who had marginalized social identities either because of their sexuality or ethnicity. Online civic participation also strengthened those with already formed civic identities and facilitated global orientation in all my participants.

My study also probed into women's pathways to becoming civically interested and digitally active for women. I found that inherent dispositions, value systems, and amounts of exposure to multicultural influences growing up (such as in the family, through college courses, or travel) are the important factors in shaping these women's civic and global interest. The Internet, however, remains an important amplifying influence. Even if the civic websites helped only those who are already civically engaged, my participants and I see it as a value addition. It is normally a small group of passionate people who leads social change in any society, and if the Internet supports their work, then it is a significant contribution.

Democracies are not sustained just by movements, mobilization, or occasional voting.

Democracies are sustained by citizens or civic actors who are “democratic” beings (Dewey, 1987), whose day-to-day behavior and thoughts arise from a core set of democratic values. Online civic participation helps in reinforcing and nurturing the core set of democratic values discursively, through individually small but collectively significant acts of communication, endorsement, symbolic solidarity, and public connectedness. One votes as a citizen every five years and pays taxes annually, but it is the small daily actions and individual acts of communication that shape and sustain one’s civic self-image. Such day-to-day participation keeps one’s civic interests, purpose, affinities, and identities on the radar. The Internet has the potential, albeit not guaranteed, to provide opportunities for daily civic communicative action.

Again, I would refrain from engaging in cyber utopianism. The Internet is only a tool and it can evolve in positive or negative directions depending on several cultural, economic, and political factors. In his award-winning book *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, McChesney (1999) makes a sharp argument about commercialism and the monopolies that dominate the Internet governance; Morozov (2011) has pointedly called our attention to increasing government surveillance of activists. Most of my participants engage in the softer version of activism through education and awareness building that does not directly confront big business or governments. This could be a reason why they have not experienced any threatening consequences of online engagement. It is also ironic that those of my participants who fight economic inequality and exploitation through the Internet have to depend on the flows of the global capital and sweatshops for their computers, smartphone, and the Internet related infrastructure, and while they struggle to sensitize people and governments about climate change, their computers, cellphones, and other gadgets are contributing to the trash dumps created in poor countries by the big corporations.

Shirky (2008, p.23) rightly points out that “[t]hough some of the early utopianism around new technologies suggested that we were heading into some sort of post-hierarchical paradise, that’s not what is happening now, and it is not what is going to happen.” I am certainly aware of the limited power of the global civil society under corporate and political backlash. Individual or collective agency, however, is always exercised and experienced among imperfect conditions, with imperfect tools, within structural limitations and cultural impositions. Even when it is illusory in some ways, it is a major life force. Transcultural citizenship nurtures this life force.

My study is rather small and it is difficult to predict any large-scale global impact of transcultural citizenship as a civic subculture on our dominant citizenship practices. Whether this subculture will flourish or lose its momentum depends on several factors: one, our policies addressing Internet neutrality, democratic and affordable Internet access, and digital inequalities; two, our rethinking of civic education that is more globally-oriented rather than focused on nationalism; three, introducing innovative learning experiences that encourage public engagement and agonistic communication skills in citizens; and four, designing online spaces that value and use these skills. Transcultural citizenship, however, offers us a way of imagining citizenship that is more suitable to handling our increasingly global, plural, and converged lives without losing the joy of belonging and connecting with fellow human beings. My study shows that the affordances of the Internet can be used for experiencing agency amidst macro forces. It is now up to us to design the appropriate education and policy initiatives in order to realize the hopes that this nascent subculture raises.

Future Directions

My study has raised several questions that I would like to probe further; for example, under what conditions does so-called “clicktivism” produce social change? What kind of online

civic communities may inspire civic participation in those who do not have high civic interest? What kind of education and digital policies will nurture transcultural citizenship? What kind of policies will reduce digital and gender inequalities in different parts of the world?

There are two specific gender-related questions that I would like to examine in-depth in the future. Some studies, for example Harris (2010) and Livingstone (2009) indicate that girls are more likely to find value in digital civic engagement than boys. My participants have touched upon reasons that make online civic engagement attractive for them; for example, anonymity that facilitates the discussion of taboo subjects without the fear of consequences, the ability to publicly engage from the safety of the home, and for some, gender neutrality in discourse. The connection between gender and online civic engagement needs further examination.

I have also been intrigued by the debates on privilege and voice. I am aware that my participants are from privileged backgrounds as compared to many people in the world. When they claim to give voice to those who are marginalized or oppressed, are they speaking for others and in turn silencing those who are underprivileged? My study has not examined this issue in detail and I expect to focus on it in my future research.

This study examines online spaces that are meant for civic engagement. But civic engagement does not happen only in these spaces. There are many commercial and entertainment focused spaces that can inspire civic engagement, but the research on these spaces is still limited. Further research on the potential of commercial and entertainment-based online spaces for civic participation may suggest ways to involve those who are not attracted to civic websites.

Finally, I would like to mention the personal positive implication of this study for me. The connections I have made through this study have continued even after two years have passed since my interviews. Mayang and I have conversations about opportunities for graduate studies

and with Saumya I discuss fellowships and internships; Valerie and Ginger participated on a conference panel that I proposed; Katerina, Shahla, and I share interesting academic links; and Gwenn continues to involve me in her online campaigns. Andrea and I met for coffee and dinner when she visited Madison. As I write this, I am still in touch with most of these women -- a brief “hello” on Google chat, a Facebook message now and then, or some follow up questions and answers on Skype. The study not only gave me an in-depth understanding of the affordances of the Internet for global connection and raised my hopes about transcultural citizenship; it brought a vibrant group of passionate and engaged women into my life.

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APPENDIX 1A: INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE SURVEY

Please help with the survey on Women as Digital and Global Citizens

Transnational Civic Engagement on Online Platforms: Young Women as Global Citizens

Hello. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. I am studying how women feel about citizenship when they participate on transnational websites. I'm asking you to participate in a brief survey for the purpose of this research. The focus of my research is on women who use online platforms for building global connections with others, based on their values, beliefs, and issue concerns. My study explores the contemporary challenges of women's leadership development, civic education, intercultural communication, and media literacy programs..

Here is the link to the survey

https://uwmadison.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5in8Xftu2h8V5ME

The survey would take approximately 5-7 minutes. **At the end of the survey, if you are willing to be contacted for more information through an email exchange and participate in an interview please checkmark the box and add your email.** This participation is completely voluntary. Please feel free to share the survey link among your civic minded networks. Thanks very much for your participation. It is very valuable for my research.

Manisha Pathak-Shelat
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Wisconsin-Madison
5115 Vilas Hall
821 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706
Email: shelat@wisc.edu

**APPENDIX 1B: ONLINE SURVEY OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION ON GLOBAL
CIVIC WEBSITES**

(The questionnaire begins from the next page)

Women as Global Citizens

Q1.1 Please read the following consent form carefully if you volunteer to participate in the survey. Please click the 'agree' button at the end of the consent form before proceeding to take the survey. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN- MADISON Research Participant Information and Consent Form Title of the Study: Transnational Civic Engagement on Online Platforms: Young Women as Global Citizens You are invited to participate in this survey because you have been active in a transnational online civic engagement community. Only the researcher will have access to the data and no identifying information will be part of the data. The data will be electronically stored under password protection. They will not be shared with any one and your identity will not be revealed in any publication based on the data. As soon as the data analysis is over the data will be destroyed. If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to participate in a brief survey about online civic engagement. Your participation will last approximately 5-7 minutes. There are no direct benefits of the study but you may have more clarity about your online transnational civic engagement. Since the survey is to be conducted online there is some risk of a breach of confidentiality due to the nature of the technology. Once I have the survey data, I will make sure that they are not stored with any identifying information. The survey asks questions about the frequency and type of online participation on civic engagement oriented websites and some background information like age, occupation, and educational status. Please feel free to click on the link to read the survey before you agree to take it. While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published. Unless you agree to participate further in the study and provide your contact information, you are not asked to reveal your name or address or any other identifying information anywhere in the survey. You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research please contact me at the following address. Manisha Pathak Shelat School of Journalism and Mass Communication University of Wisconsin-Madison 5115 Vilas Hall, 821 University Avenue Madison, WI 53706 Phone: 608-234-4146 Email: shelat@wisc.edu You can also contact Professor Lewis Friedland at lfriedla@wisc.edu. If you are not satisfied with response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320 in Madison, WI, USA or at lmlarson@ls.wisc.edu. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on you. You can decide not to answer particular questions. If you agree to participate in this survey please click on the 'agree' button and proceed to the survey.

- I agree to participate (1)
- I don't agree to participate (2)

If I don't agree to participate Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q17 Background Information

Q1 What is your age?

- Under 18 (1)
- 18-21 (2)
- 22-25 (3)
- 26-30 (4)
- 31-34 (5)
- 35-39 (6)
- 40-44 (7)
- 45-49 (8)
- 50 or above (9)

Q9 What level of formal education have you completed ? If you are a student please mention your current level.

- High School (1)
- Bachelor's degree (2)
- Master's degree (3)
- Doctorate (4)
- Professional degree (5)
- Diploma or certification (6)
- Other (please specify) (7) _____

Q10 What is the country of your origin?

Q11 What is the country of your current residence?

Q12 What kind of area do you currently live in?

- Metro (1)
- City (2)
- Small town (3)
- rural area (4)

Q13 What kind of area do you work in?

- Metro (1)
- City (2)
- Small town (3)
- Rural area (4)

Q14 What is your occupation/profession? Please include both full time and part time work. Please also mention if you are a student, volunteer, home maker or stay- at- home mom.

	Full-time (1)	Part-time (2)
Occupation/profession 1 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Occupation/profession 2 (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Occupation/profession 3 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Occupation/profession 4 (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 Through which website did you come to this survey?

- Click to write Choice 1 (1) _____

Q18 Participation on the website through which you are taking the survey

Q16 What roles do you play on this website/in this online community? Please feel free to mention more than one role or add other categories.

- Leader (1)
- Moderator (2)
- Administrator (3)
- Blogger (4)
- Commentator (5)
- Visitor (6)
- Other (please specify) (7) _____
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Q19 What kind of activities do you undertake on this website? Please feel free to mention more than one activity or add more activities.

- Blogging (1)
- Commenting (2)
- Proposing action (3)
- Advocacy (4)
- Fund raising (5)
- Joining networks (6)
- Signing petitions (7)
- Uploading artwork (8)
- Other (please specify) (9) _____
- Other (please specify) (10) _____

Q20 When did you join this website?

- More than 4 years ago (1)
- Between 2 to 4 years ago (2)
- One year ago (3)
- A few months ago (4)
- New visitor (5)

Q21 How frequently do you visit this website?

- Daily (1)
- 2-3 Times a Week (2)
- Once a Week (3)
- 2-3 Times a Month (4)
- Once a Month (5)
- Less than Once a Month (6)
- Hardly ever (7)

Q41 How frequently do you post on this website?

- Daily (1)
- 2-3 Times a Week (2)
- Once a Week (3)
- 2-3 Times a Month (4)
- Once a Month (5)
- Less than Once a Month (6)
- Never (7)

Q23 What is the nature of your networks on this website? Please feel free to select more than one network.

- Friends (1)
- Subscribers (2)
- Followers (3)
- Project or issue based networks (4)
- Professional (5)
- Other (please specify) (6)

Q25 Participation in other online communities

Q26 Are you a member or regular visitor on any other online communities?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q27 If yes, please give names of the five most important websites to you.

	Global/ transnational (1)	National (2)	Local (3)
Click to write Statement 1 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Click to write Statement 2 (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Click to write Statement 3 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Click to write Statement 4 (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Click to write Statement 5 (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q28 What roles do you play on other civic websites or civic online communities? Please feel free to select more than one role or add other categories.

- Leader (1)
- Moderator (2)
- Administrator (3)
- Blogger (4)
- Commentator (5)
- Visitor (6)
- Other (please specify) (7) _____
- Other (please specify) (8) _____

Q29 What kind of activities do you undertake on other civic websites? Please feel free to select more than one activity or add other activities.

- Blogging (1)
- Comments (2)
- Proposing action (3)
- Advocacy (4)
- Fund raising (5)
- Joining networks (6)
- Signing petitions (7)
- Uploading artwork (8)
- Other (please specify) (9) _____
- Other (please specify) (10) _____

Q30 When did you first start visiting a civic website?

- More than four years ago (1)
- Between 2 to 4 years ago (2)
- One year ago (3)
- A few months ago (4)
- new visitor (5)

Q31 How frequently do you visit other civic websites?

- Never (1)
- Less than Once a Month (2)
- Once a Month (3)
- 2-3 Times a Month (4)
- Once a Week (5)
- 2-3 Times a Week (6)
- Daily (7)

Q32 How frequently do you post on other civic websites?

- Never (1)
- Less than Once a Month (2)
- Once a Month (3)
- 2-3 Times a Month (4)
- Once a Week (5)
- 2-3 Times a Week (6)
- Daily (7)

Q34 Are you a member of any offline (or face- to-face) civic organizations?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Are you a member of any offline (or face- to-face) civic ... Yes Is Selected

Q36 Please list the three organizations most important to you.

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)

Q37 What are the issues with which you normally engage through online civic websites? Please select all the issues that are relevant to your engagement.

- Environment (1)
- Gender (2)
- Violence (3)
- Food (4)
- Economic inequality (5)
- Social justice (6)
- Education (7)
- Substance abuse (8)
- Health (9)
- Race/religion (10)
- Other (please specify) (11)
- Other (please specify) (12)
- Other (please specify) (13)

Q38 Are you willing to participate in further research on this topic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q39 If yes, please provide an email id on which I can contact you. Thanks.

APPENDIX 2A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Transnational Civic Engagement on On-line Platforms: Women as Global Citizens

Make sure they have read the consent form and agree to participate and allow recording. Make sure there is not any risk involved in Skype/phone interview

1. Background information

Name, age, country you were born and brought up in, country you live in now, occupation etc.

I would like to get a picture of your typical day. Just to get an idea of how do you fit different activities in a day-work, family, leisure, online activities.

In a normal day how much time do you spend on the Internet. Doing what? Visiting what kind of websites (social, professional, civic, political, commercial or entertainment related) ? Are there any daily musts? Would you describe yourself as a techie/ new technology enthusiasts (will explain the term if necessary) or a more functional user? Are you into social media: Facebook, Twitter, Pintrest, Tumblr? How do you use them- social, civic, professional, political ways?

When did you start taking interest in social issues? Civic life? What triggered your interest?

When were you first introduced to a civic online community? How did that happen? Was there anything memorable about that experience?

When did you start using the Internet, computer, and other digital media, if any?

What came first- your interest in civic issues or your interest in new media like Internet? Do you remember one leading to the other?

2. Pathways to engagement

Would you consider yourself different or unusual compared to other women in your family, friends, and colleagues? Why- Because of your interest in civic issues; Because of your competence with digital media?

Does it have anything to do with the way you grew up? Did being a girl matter? How?

What else from your background do you think influenced the way you responded to civic issues and the way you took up digital media/Internet? For example, parents, teachers, mentors, your economic class, peer group, membership in any institutions, school, the country of your origin or the country where you live now etc.? Do you see influence of any major events or personalities or role models? If you have to single out one or two factors as significant to the way you are engaging with civic issues and digital media, what would they be?

3. Current transnational and online engagement

What are the different civic/political/issue oriented online platforms/communities that you are part of? What attracted you to these platforms/communities? Which of these are global (transnational), national or local?

Would you direct me to those important to you where I can look at the online participation?

Who is your audience? Who do you write for? Do you try to influence government officials, politicians or policy makers?

Do you experience any kind of 'community' on these platforms? How? Do you feel any kind of bond or affinity to people who you meet only online? Is there a close group of people you often/intimately interact with- local, national, global? Do you interact with them outside this civic platform? What do you talk about when not on civic platform?

How different features/structures of different websites influence your participation? Would you give examples of features on some favorite civic websites that you really like; that makes participation easy or more satisfying?

What are the different types of activities- expression of opinion, information sharing, advocacy, fundraising, activism, making connections, etc.- do you participate in on these platforms?

What are the different roles you have on these sites-writer, member, commentator, activist, lurker, consumer? Do you often comment on other people's posts?

Is your participation issue-specific? How do you choose what issues to engage with?

How did you develop interest in these issues?

In the case of global or transnational participation how do you choose the countries that need your support?

4. Motivations and sustaining participation

Why did you decide to be part of an online and transnational civically oriented community?

Please tell me about the civic websites that are important to you. For what purpose do you communicate on these websites?

What kind of response have you received for your on-line activities? I sometimes see no comments on the blogs that people write. What is your experience like? If there are no comments and no dialogue, why do you think bloggers keep writing?

Have you ever had a frustrating experience when you participated in transnational civic websites? What is exhilarating and frustrating about your transnational/online experience?

Are there any major issues that have bothered you with reference to your online participation?

How long have you been active on these websites? What has kept you going? How do you sustain your long term interest and participation?

How do you balance civic activities with family, professional commitments and hobbies or leisure activities?

Do you see what you are doing as enacting citizenship? What have been some tangible or intangible outcomes of your engagement?

Are there other positive outcomes to your participation like expanding friendship or professional connections, academic credit, career advancement, travel, resume building? Do you associate any of them with citizenship?

5. Barriers to participation

Are there any special barriers to online and transnational engagement due to different factors? For example, being a woman from a particular nation, class or religion or caste, your age, your marital status etc. Has there been any family resentment to your online activities? Any government policies that restrict your participation?

6. Notion of citizenship and civic engagement

Civil society, civic life, civic engagement etc are some words we hear often today. What is your idea of 'civic life'? Are you familiar with the term 'civic engagement'? What are the kind of attitudes and actions you consider as 'civic engagement'?

Of Which country are you a citizen? What does being a 'citizen' mean to you? Do you associate any rights with being a citizen? Any responsibilities? Do you associate citizenship with some kind of mental frame, attitude, behaviour, action, or activities? How do you think you came to acquire this understanding? Has your understanding of citizenship and civic engagement changed over time? How?

What is a picture of "good citizen" that you have in mind?

7. Off-line connections to online civic engagement Connections between local/national/transnational activities

Do you primarily see yourself as a citizen of your community/your nation/world? How do you act as a citizen at each level?

What role do you play and what activities you do as a citizen in your local community? As a citizen of your nation?

Do you think of yourself as a citizen of the world? Why or why not? How did you develop this kind of attitude to citizenship? Do you always feel this way or sometimes you feel like a global citizen and other times you feel more like a citizen of your country or citizen of your city?

Does it matter from where you are or where you live?

Do you think a person can be a global citizen? When can we call someone a global citizen? Is it enough that we make the self-announcement or we need a certain attitude or we need to act in a particular way?

Do you consider your activities on the transnational/global websites as being a global citizen or performing the role and responsibilities of a global citizen? Why? In general, has Internet participation influenced your being a citizen in any way?

Have you come across criticism of online civic participation? How do you respond to the criticism that Internet based activism is "Slaktivism" or mere "Clicktivism" (you get a pseudo-satisfaction of being active but your participation does not do much)?

Do the civic activities you do in your local geographical communities/spaces and the face-to-face networks influence your experience on online platforms and vice versa?

Do you experience conflict of loyalty around certain local/national/global issues? How do you resolve these conflicts? How do you decide which side to take?

What are some differences you have experienced in on-line and off-line engagement? Are there things you can or cannot do well in each context or can do better in a particular context?

How does being a citizen or acting as a citizen in your local community different than acting as a citizen on a global platform? Do you feel more powerful and influential in any particular context?

Do you think the kinds of Internet based communities that you participate in are good spaces for acting out citizenship? When can they be good and when not?

Are there other ways of being a global citizen?

Thanks!

APPENDIX 2B: PROFILES OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

1. Andrea Arzaba: Mexico

Andrea Arzaba, is an independent bilingual journalist based in Mexico City. While studying, Arzaba worked for various publications, including National Geographic Traveler and Animal Politico. In 2011, after working as a young journalist in the World Youth Congresses of Canada (2008) and Turkey (2010), she founded an online magazine on gender issues called The SunFlower Post. In 2009, she was selected as a peace delegate for Mexico for the Peace Camp International Program, as well as the Clinton Global Initiative. Later she travelled through Europe, Africa and South America, covering the United Nations Climate Talks from 2010 – 2013. Her experience working with social justice and digital media has led to writing and speaking about her experience covering climate change, women's and indigenous issues all around the world. Andrea is an English, Spanish and French fluent speaker, with basic knowledge of Portuguese. (At the time of writing this in April-May 2014 Andrea is working as a reporter and a translator for IJNet, as well as the Communications Coordinator for ITDP Mexico. She is also writing for various digital media organizations, such as Animal Politico, Global Voices Online and Transparency International.

2. Aya: Morocco/U.S.A. (name changed)

Aya is a 25-year-old Moroccan-American graduate student in the Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Virginia. She has lived in the U.S.A., Morocco, and the Middle East. Aya's focus is on conflict analysis. Aya volunteers both offline and online with several peacebuilding and conflict resolution organizations and writes for selected online platforms.

3. Cristina Radoi: Romania

Cristina is a 28 year old Ph.D. candidate in the National School of Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest, Romania. She studies women in Romanian military. She is a feminist activist volunteering with an offline feminist organization in Romania for about seven years and also creates awareness on women's issues through social media. Cristina has done much work on the issue of domestic violence in Romania and writes in English as well as Romanian.

4. Febi Purnamasari: Indonesia

Febi Purnamasari lives in Jakarta, Indonesia. She has a bachelor degree in political and social sciences. Febi is a co-founder of the online magazine SunFlower Post along with Andrea. Her current profession is reporter for documentary program about education on NET (National TV station). Her civic interests are education, gender equality, and social concerns. Her goals are to enlighten herself about those issues as well as local and global youth around her. (at the time of writing this profile in April 2014 Febi is off from civic activities online. However, she believes through her current profession as a reporter and scriptwriter for documentary programs, she has given contribution, though small, to her country's education).

5. Florence Floetry Khaxas: Namibia

Florence is a 24 year old college graduate and feminist and LGBTQ rights activist from Swapokmund, now living in Windhoek. She is the founder of Y-Fem: Young Feminist Movement of Namibia. Y-Fem has both online and offline presence. Florence is part of a global network of activists through social media and participation in the international conferences and training programs. Florence is also active in the network of Southern African Young Women's Network.

6. Ginger Garner: U.S.A.

PT, DPT (candidate), ATC, PYT

Ginger has been a physical therapist and health care activist working in orthopedics, women's health, and pain management for 15 years. Ginger is 38 years old and has three young children, and is of Native American origin. Ginger's work focuses specifically on women's and maternal health, which extends beyond the borders of the U.S. through digital activism to Haiti and Afghanistan, where she has completed successful fundraisers for improving the health of young women and mothers. Her goal is to raise awareness of the importance of partnership in health care, specifically for mothers, which she does through her blogs, graduate and post-graduate teaching, and through her upcoming textbook and software project. Ginger has been a civically active online since 2004. (Ginger is currently completing doctoral studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is continuing her campaign toward partnership in health care).

7. Graciela Selaimen: Brazil

Graciela is a publisher, Internet governance expert, and activist based in Rio, Brazil. Graciela has been a journalist and has worked in advocacy through civil society groups for more than 15 years. She is also involved in gender and women's issues. She is 45 years old and has two college age children. Graciela was one of the first women bloggers in Brazil when she started blogging in 2000-1001. Graciela writes online in English as well as in Portuguese.

8. Gulab: India/U.S.A. (name changed)

Gulab graduated from the University of Illinois in Chicago in 2011, had a brief stint in Washington D.C. in public policy and has since moved to California where she works as an educator and artist. She spent her childhood partly in Chicago and partly in Gujarat, India. Gulab has worked as an organizer offline in immigration, labor rights, youth, and art. She has been active on social media like Twitter and Tumblr where her critical writing on racism, class, gender identity, post-colonial history, and South-Asian diaspora has had a vast following.

9. Gwenn Chimuti: Zimbabwe

Gwenn is a 25- year- old sociology graduate from Harare. She is a marketing executive and a development worker in the area of reproductive health issues and HIV/AIDS. She has worked as

an assistant to the national youth coordinator of the Zimbabwe AIDS Council and is also involved in the regional Southern African programs and the programs all over the African Union. Gwenn has traveled all over Zimbabwe and the African region and at the time of interview was preparing for relocating to Ethiopia for an year. She carries out online civic activities through social media and also has a personal blog.

10. Helen Grace Antonopoulos: South Africa

Helen Grace Antonopoulos is an 18 year old high school student from a small town called Oudtshoorn situated in the Western Cape of South Africa. She is a blend of Greek, Italian and Afrikaans origins. Helen spent a year and a half (2012 and 2013) administering her high school's Green Group Facebook group. Her civic interests include animal welfare and rights, environmentally friendly living, creating awareness of gay rights. For the last three years she has shared/ posted/ liked articles and pictures from organizations' Facebook pages. These organizations include PETA, Greenpeace, and those involving the LGBTQ communities. Helen has been volunteering offline at a local animal shelter, recycling projects, relays for cancer awareness and support, and for projects that improve the appearance of her town. (Currently Helen is a full time student at the University of Cape Town studying a double major in Archaeology, as well as Environmental and Geographical Science).

11. Laura Vidal: Venezuela/France

Laura was born in Venezuela and has been studying in Paris on a scholarship. She is doing her Ph.D. in Literature. Laura has her own blog on Tumblr and also blogs regularly for Global Voices Online. While Laura was working in an administrative job with a ministry she was introduced to blogging by a friend. She mostly writes about literature, cultural issues, and about Venezuela. She is not happy with the kind of biased and limited coverage Venezuela gets in the main stream media and her blog is a way to highlight different aspects of Venezuela, its culture and Venezuelan women. Her mission is to enhance intercultural understanding.

12. Mayang Arum Anjar Rizky: Indonesia

Mayang was born in Pontianak, West Borneo, Indonesia and had lived there for 9 years before moving to the capital city Jakarta with her parents. She is 21 years old and in the final phase of her studies in the University of Indonesia, with a major in Economics. She is of a mixed heritage with a Javanese father and a Sudanese mother. Mayang's dream is equal opportunity for all young people in the world to enrich their knowledge, be it through formal education or open source media that is now being provided by the Internet. Mayang accesses the Internet every day and participates in some online civic platforms every week. She likes to connect with people from all over the world, sharing ideas and talking about issues and considers it an exciting way to open our mind.

13. Nadia Rabbaa, Morocco/France

Nadia is a 27-year-old journalist who lives in Morocco. Nadia has a French mother and a Moroccan father. Born and raised in Morocco in childhood, Nadia went to university in France and studied political science. She also has a master's degree in international journalism from Quebec, Canada. Nadia has been working as a journalist for six years and at the time of interviewing was working on the initial phase of a project that would train Moroccan congresswomen to use social media and bridge the gap between Moroccan youth and politicians.

14. Olfa Lazreg: Tunisia/Djibouti

Olfa Lazreg is 26 years Old. She was born and brought up in Tunisia and has been living in Djibouti for nine months, working as an international youth fellow (coordinating youth program) within UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) Country Office Djibouti. Olfa joined the Tunisian Association against STI's & HIV/AIDS when she was twenty years old. Later she was selected by UNFPA Arab States Regional Office as an international youth peer fellow and then affected to Djibouti to coordinate youth activities in the country supported by UNFPA Country Office Djibouti. Olfa is also active online on youth-led websites like Y-PEER- Youth Peer Education Network, GYCA- Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Youth-Rise, and TakingITGlobal.

15. Petronella Gaes: Namibia/Angola

Petronella is a 25 years old woman from Windhoek, Namibia who works as a private secretary in Angola. She frequently travels between Angola and Namibia. Petronella is of Damara>Nama ethnic origin (also known as the click Group because of the clicks in the language), Petronella has a bachelor degree in public management and remains interested in online engagement (at least several times a month) in human causes through websites like All Out which tries to protect the rights of global gay community and also Avaaz besides other social media [sites](#) that fight for the rights of marginalised communities.

16. Raji K.C: Nepal (name changed)

Raji is a 31 year old research officer from Nagarkot, Nepal. She has been involved as a volunteer with several non-profits in Nepal for the past ten years and is also active online in global networks like the Student World Assembly, Girls Help Girls and ABC4All. Raji is a mother of two young daughters.

17. Rola Osseiran: Lebanon/Kuwait/Canada

Rola was born in Lebanon, raised in Kuwait and now lives in Canada. She is pursuing a master's program in museum studies and international relations. Rola has three adult children. Rola uses Internet mostly for news and following her interest in art and civic issues but calls herself a "book person" and her civic work is predominantly offline through volunteering in her local community.

18. Sania Sufi: Pakistan/U.S.A.

Sania is a Pakistani-American freelance writer and activist from Chicago. Sania graduated with history and political science major with a minor in Islamic World Studies the year before our interview and had been writing for an online publication MuslimahSource about imperialist feminism & Islam. Sania also shares her views and analysis on post-colonial theory, history, racism, and south-Asian diaspora on social media and through her own blog. In the past she interned and worked as a youth coordinator at the Muslim Women Resource Center in Chicago and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

19. Saumya Viktoria Deva: India/U.S.A.

Saumya is a 21 year old American woman of Indian origin. She is an undergraduate student with international studies major at the University of Wisconsin, -Madison. Career goals include attending law school following Peace Corps service and possibly joining the U.S. foreign service representing U.S. foreign policy goals abroad. Saumya's online civic activities include engagement on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter in order to obtain and share information on political events. (At the time of writing this Saumya has just graduated and is preparing to leave for Peace Corps service in Togo as an English and Gender Education volunteer).

20. Shahla Tabassum: Pakistan

Shahla is a 47 year old university professor in gender studies from Rawalpindi, Pakistan. She is a mother of a teenage daughter. Shahla has a long experience of working with organizations like the Family Planning Association of Pakistan and Action-Aid in Pakistan before taking up teaching. She is the lead teacher of the Global Understanding course at her university in collaboration with East Carolina University and an active member of the Indigenous Feminist Group online.

21. Valerie Young: U.S.A.

Valerie Young is the Advocacy Coordinator, National Association of Mothers' Centers and represents NAMC and its grassroots public policy MOTHERS Initiative in Washington D.C. Trained as an attorney, Valerie is an advocate for recognition of mothers' contributions to national welfare and a proponent of economic security and independence for those who care for family members. Valerie analyzes state and national legislative action through the lens of motherhood, educating policy makers and others who work on issues pertinent to women. Valerie advises our members on developments in the political arena, demystifying the political process and encouraging the personal activism of mothers and other family caregivers. Valerie now blogs about the effect of family care work on a woman's economic security and related issues at Your (Wo)Man in Washington, as well as spurring discussion among stakeholders via Facebook and Twitter. She also serves on the Advisory Council for the Caring Economy

Campaign, as well as other collaborative efforts promoting women's empowerment. Valerie is 52 years old and has two teenage children.

22. Yekaterina (Katerina): Kazakhstan

Kaerina is a 47 year old lawyer, international consultant on combating human trafficking, and leader of an NGO from Almaty. She is a Russian Kazakh with blended Tartar, Polish, and Moldovan heritage. Her interests include comparative cultural studies, international management, forensic psychology, and jewelry (especially taking pictures of jewelry). She uses Facebook to exchange some thoughts with people of more or less similar interests, and to share things she considers to be important to share. (At the time of writing this Katerina is an international consultant hired by IOM. Her current locations are between Kazakhstan and Iraq where she is involved in a project).

23. Yohana de Andrade: Brazil

Yohana is a 24 year old digital media professional and a trained journalist from Sao Paulo with seven years of professional experience as a journalist. She is also a blogger at Global Voices Online. Yohana is a prolific Internet user and content creator with presence on multiple social media platforms that she uses for engaging in civic issues. She is also part of a group of feminist bloggers from Brazil and writes for Women's News Network. Yohana writes in both English and Portuguese.

(Note: The length of the individual profile and its content vary depending upon the nature and amount of information each participant preferred to reveal.)

APPENDIX 3: GUIDELINES FOR AN INITIAL SURVEY OF GLOBAL WEBSITES

1. Nature of the site: Whether it is a youth site or a general site. If it is a youth site, is it youth led, adult led or a mix of both?
2. Administration and leadership: Who are the administrators and by what capacity they are performing this role (for example, individuals selected on some bases or appointed by an organization or becoming administrators as a job responsibility by virtue of joining professionally an organization).
3. Level of moderation: Is the participation on the site centrally moderated? Is there an appointed moderator whose role is clearly defined and announced? Are there expectations of self-moderation by clearly explicated rules, etiquette, and expectations?
4. Main mission: What larger goal the organization or the community strives for? What is the purpose of their existence and engagement?
5. Membership structure and size: Is the site open to participation only for members or any visitor? Who are the members? How many members are registered members? How many members appear active? Are there different categories of membership? What is the process of becoming a member? Is approval from the leaders/moderators/administrators necessary for becoming a member? What is the number of visitors (daily or total whatever is available)
6. Nature of activities: What activities happen on the site? Off the site? Knowledge and information sharing, expression of opinion, initiating and joining networks, building personal friendship or one- on- one professional contacts, advocacy, fundraising, activism etc.

7. Tools and ways of communication/ features: Different features on the website that facilitate different activities and engagement. For example, clicking to share, join or endorse; signing a petition; making and sharing profiles; artistic, civic or political expression through uploading of text, photo, video, sound; friend lists or contacts; archives etc.
8. Scope of reach: Global, within a particular consortium of countries or a particular region of the world.
9. Status: non-profit, charity, corporate etc.
10. Connections between on-line and off-line activities of the organization: Is the website stand-alone or an extension of an off-line organization?
11. Affiliations/partnerships: Affiliated to any larger on-line or off-line organization.
12. Years of website being active: Time since inception.
13. Issues addressed: Does the organization focus on a particular issue like environment, women's rights or HIV/AIDS, offers multiple options or is totally open to visitors/members bringing the issues they are interested in?
14. Nature of communication: Is the communication one-way or there is cross-dialogue, debate and deliberation? Who is writing for whom? Are there prompts from the administrators for starting a thread or the expressions are spontaneous?
15. To what purpose do members communicate and how is the on-line communication by members used (For example, sent to policy makers, fed into mainstream media)
16. Nature of networks within the website: For example, friends, inspired by issues, project supporters, comment threads etc.

17. Funding/sponsorship: Who funds and sponsors the website and different activities on the website. Are member donations a part of funding?
18. Other notes: Claims made by the website about its own efficacy, awards etc.

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF WEBSITES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

1. Websites contacted for posting the survey

1. Global Voices Online (posted on their mailing list)
2. International Museum of Women (posted on their Facebook page and shared on Twitter)
3. United Network of Young Peacebuilders: UNOY Peacebuilders (posted on their Facebook page)
4. Peace and Collaborative Development Network (posted on their website by me as a member)
5. Taking IT Global (posted on the website by me as a member and also by one of the participants)
6. Avaaz.org (Posted on their Facebook page by me)
7. Greenpeace.org (posted on their Facebook page by me)
8. Women on Web (reposted by a participant)
9. International Women's Leadership (Posted on their Facebook page by a participant)
10. SAYWNET (posted on their Facebook page)
11. feministing.com (posted on the website by me as a member)
12. mothercenter.org (posted by a participant)
13. Service Civil International (reposted by a participant)
14. Peacejam (did not post)
15. UNICEF Voices of Youth (did not post)
16. Harry Potter Alliance (did not post)
17. Worldbank YouThink (did not post)
18. Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (did not post)

19. Several participants mentioned Twitter as their source for reaching the survey but did not specifically mention the account. Some also reached it through their Facebook friends.

2. Additional global/transnational civic websites (English language) mentioned by participants in the survey

1. Student World Assembly
2. conectas.org
3. A Better Community for All (ABC4All)
4. Women Waging Peace Network
5. Global Partners in Education
6. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
7. Young Feminist Wire
8. Global Human Rights Education Network
9. People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
10. The SunFlower Post
11. Woman for Woman International
12. Gender Action.org
13. Amnesty International
14. Soliya
15. Peace x Peace
16. The Culture of Peace News Network (CPNN)
17. idealist.org
18. Sokka gakkai International (sgi.org)

3. Additional global civic websites mentioned by the interview participants

1. Young women First
2. Vocativ
3. Animal Politico
4. Global Campaign for Climate Action (www.tcktcktck.org)
5. Future Challenges
6. PeaceWomen.org
7. DipLo Internet Governance Community
8. Y-Peers.org
9. Caring Economy Campaign
10. change.org
11. iknowpolitics.org
12. WorldPulse.org
13. YouthRise.org

List of websites included in the detailed analysis for the web-sphere chapter

1. Global Voices Online
2. International Museum of Women
3. UNOY Peacebuilders
4. Peace and Collaborative Development Network
5. Taking IT Global
6. Avaaz.org
7. SAYWNET (small: run as a blog)

8. feministing.com
9. [Peacejam](http://Peacejam.org)
10. [UNICEF Voices of Youth](http://UNICEF.org)
11. [Harry Potter Alliance](http://HarryPotterAlliance.org)
12. [World bank YouThink](http://WorldBank.org)
13. [ABC4All](http://ABC4All.org)
14. [Young Feminist Wire](http://YoungFeministWire.org)
15. [Global Human Rights Education Network \(Organizations are members\)](http://GlobalHumanRightsEducationNetwork.org)
16. [The SunFlower Post](http://TheSunFlowerPost.org)
17. peacepeace.org
18. [Future Challenges \(originally founded and financed by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in Germany\)](http://FutureChallenges.org)
19. PeaceWomen.org
20. [DipLo Internet Governance Community](http://DipLo.org)
21. [Y-Peer.org \(UNFPA\)](http://Y-Peer.org)
22. [Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS](http://GlobalYouthCoalition.org)
23. iknowpolitics.org
24. WorldPulse.org
25. YouthRise.org
26. [The Global Youth Action Network \(a network of youth organizations\)](http://TheGlobalYouthActionNetwork.org)
27. [Association for Progressive Communications](http://AssociationforProgressiveCommunications.org)
28. [Soliya](http://Soliya.org)

Websites not included in detailed analysis but worth mentioning as a part of civic web-sphere (these websites were either of organizations whose major work was offline or not found active enough when I visited them. Some of them acted more as information repositories rather than civic communities but I reviewed them as part of my understanding of the global civic web-sphere because my participants mentioned them)

1. Greenpeace.org (mostly campaign)
2. Women on Web (online abortion help)
3. International Women's Leadership (predominantly offline)
4. Service Civil International (organizes international voluntary projects)
5. Women Waging Peace Network (The Institute for Inclusive Security. A network of experts. Main work is offline)
6. AWID (Uses Internet to expand their mainly offline activities, does not provide user generated content and many-to-many communication)
7. The Culture of Peace News Network (CPNN) (A UN initiative, doesn't seem to be active after 2012)
8. idealist.org (jobs and voluntary opportunities)
9. Sokka gakkai International (sgi.org) (online forum connects members engaged in offline activities all around the world)
10. Young women First (not active after 2012)
11. Vocativ (global citizen journalism organization)
12. Animal Politico (news oriented)
13. Global Campaign for Climate Action (www.tckctck.org) (uses online space to strengthen offline activities and give information)

14. PETA (The website is an extension of offline organization)
15. Woman for Woman International (The website is an extension of offline work)
16. Gender Action.org (online extension of an offline organization)
17. Amnesty International (campaigns)
18. Caring Economy Campaign (though the issue is globally relevant members are American)
19. change.org (campaigns)
20. Plural+ (mostly video festivals)
22. Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (connects organizations in Europe)
23. Nerdfighters.com (None of my participants mentioned it but I came across it at a much later stage in my study during a conference and found it worth including in my review)
24. SAFAIDS: Southern Africa HIV & AIDS Information Dissemination Service
25. Student World Assembly (Not accessible)