Abstract

*Exploring Connections Between Global Integration and Political Mobilization*

Jackie Smith Department of Sociology SUNY Stony Brook

The end of the Cold War brought important changes to the global political arena. Specifically, military security issues declined on the international agenda as environmental, economic, and social issues rose. At the same time, the decline of superpower conflict created space for new attempts at multilateral problem-solving. This paper explores how these changes in the global political arena have affected the ways people organize transnationally to promote political and social change. Using data from the Yearbook of International Associations I examine changes in the size, issue focus, geographic makeup, and organizational structure of the population of transnational social movement organizations (TSMOS) in recent decades. Key findings are that, while the transnational social movement sector has continued to grow since the mid-20th century, its rate of growth has slowed in the 1990s, despite the political openings of the end of the Cold War. Also, human rights and environment predominate on TSMO issue-agendas, but during the 1990s more groups adopted multi-issue organizing frames over single-issue focuses. We also saw a shift towards a greater emphasis on economic issues. The major divide in the global system between core and periphery is reflected in the population of TSMOS. But the data here link the advantages of better survival rates, access to IGOS, and legitimacy to groups that transcend the North-South divide. If the most recent patterns continue, however, the global South may be relatively less incorporated into transnational organizing efforts. Past trends towards increasing percentages of TSMO members and headquarters in Southern countries remained stagnant or reversed in the latest period. And more groups are organizing within regions (as opposed to across regions) than was true in the past. Finally, the data show a consistent trend towards greater decentralization in the organizational structures adopted by TSMOs. The research here aims to inform and shape future studies of transnational mobilization and its impacts.