

Mapping the field of reproductive health and rights using social networks

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Background

- Challenges in the reproductive health and rights (RHR) field
 - Marginal to the global policy agenda
 - Funding limitations
- Concern about where the field is going 10+ years after Cairo
- But what does the field “look” like? How do we relate to each other? How do we relate to other fields?
- Can we use this information strategically?

Research Objectives

- Identify influential actors (both opinion leaders and up-and-coming actors) in the field of reproductive health and rights
 - Actors include individuals and organizations
- Determine how the structure of the field can be used strategically in international policy debates
- Test the use of *social network analysis* in mapping the field of reproductive health and rights

Presentation Aims

- Demonstrate how social network analysis was used
- Present results of the mapping exercise
- Reflect on the use of the methods
- Discuss how results can be used

Methods

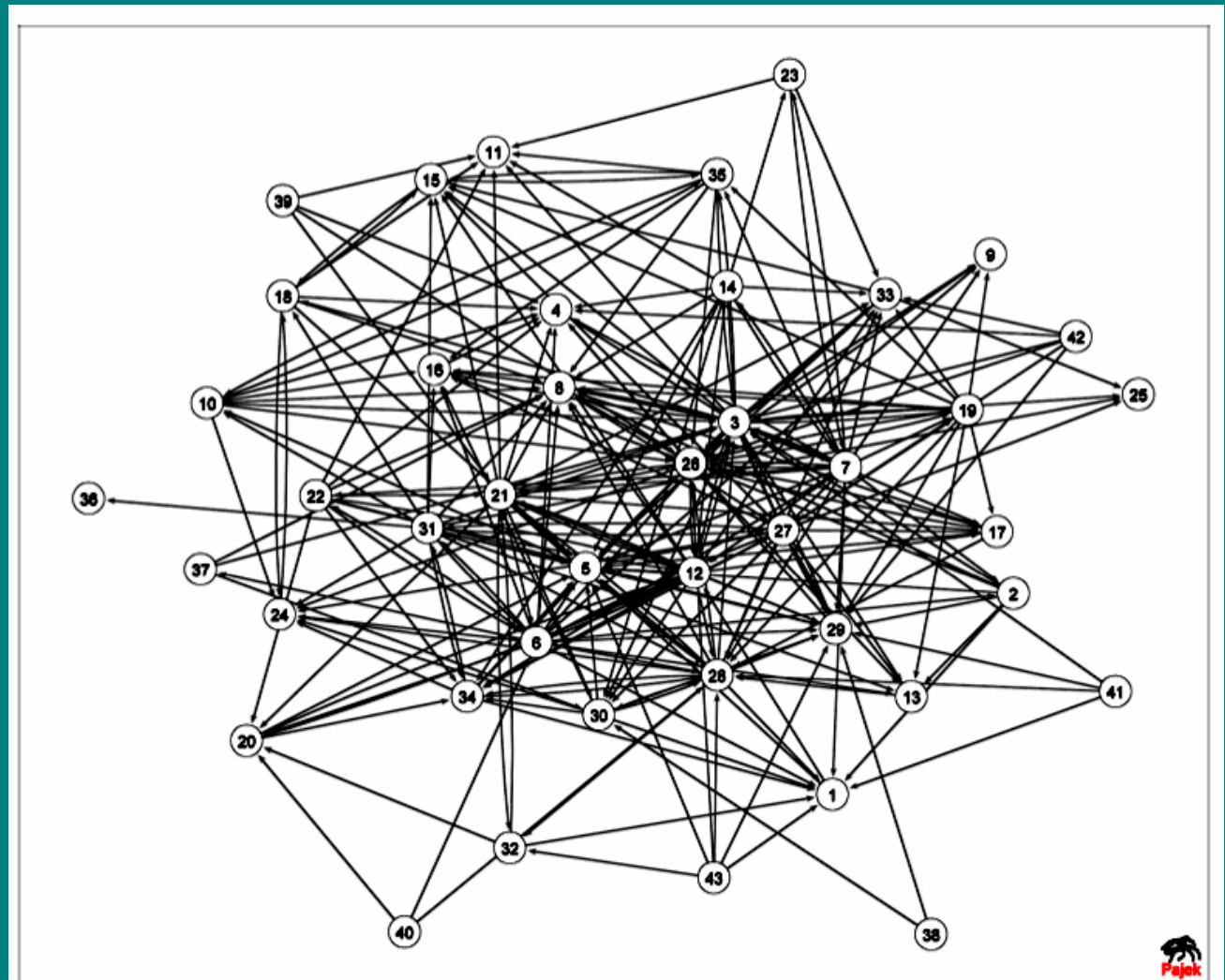
- Purposive sample of RHR professionals (N=43)
 - Names initially nominated by research team
 - Respondents asked to provide additional nominations
- Interviews & surveys over a 3-month period in 2006
- Questions probed perceptions about:
 - Influential actors in the field
 - Actors bridging to other fields
 - Challenges facing the field

Methods, cont.

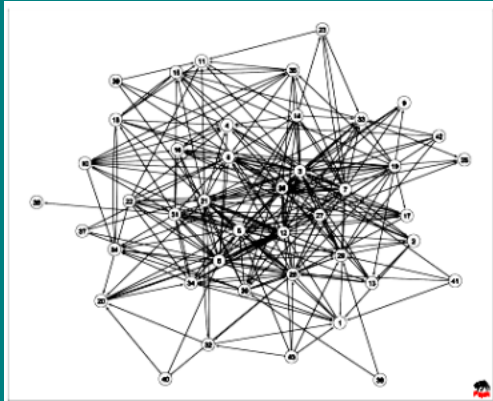
- Construction of a relational database of connected egos (*nominators*) and alters (*nominees*)
- Two separate networks:
 - a) individuals network (N=302, tied to N=43 egos)
 - b) organization network (N=338, tied to N=43 egos)

Results - Individuals network

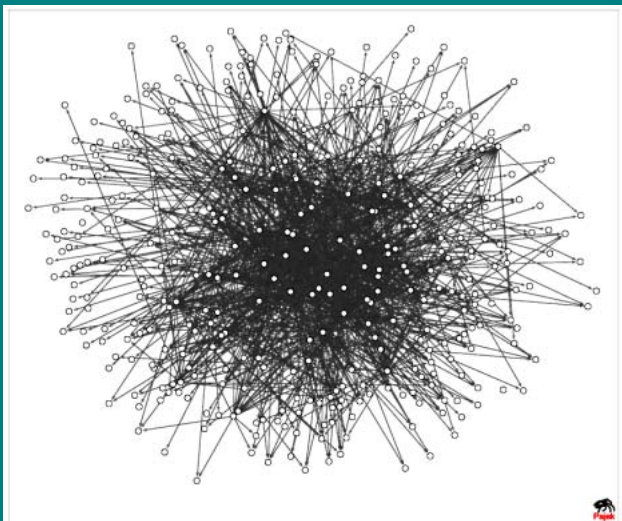
“Ego” network (N=43)



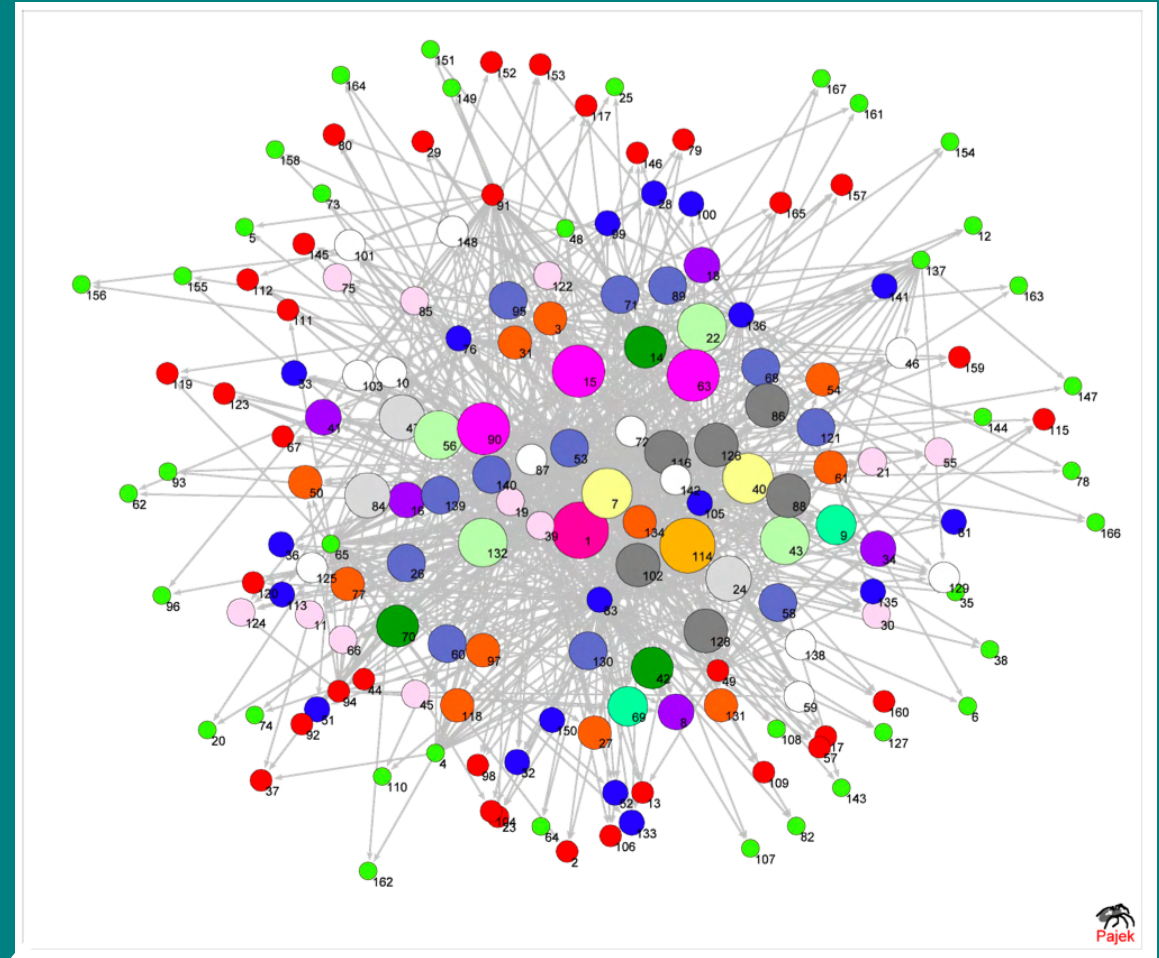
Individuals network



a) Ego network

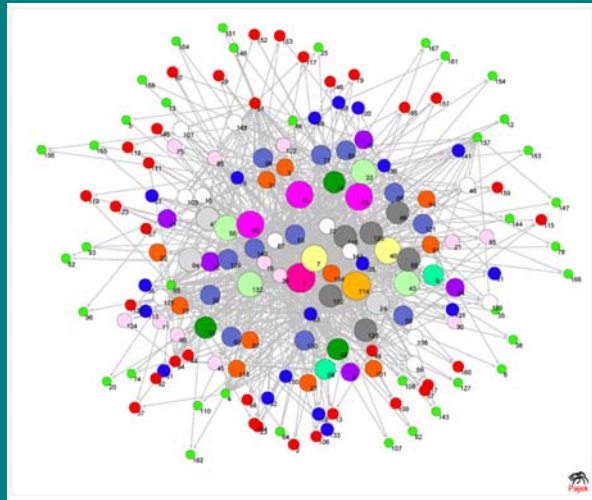


b) Egos & all alters (1 cite min)

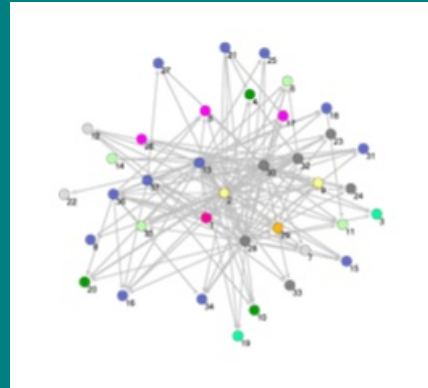


c) Egos & alters (2 cite min)

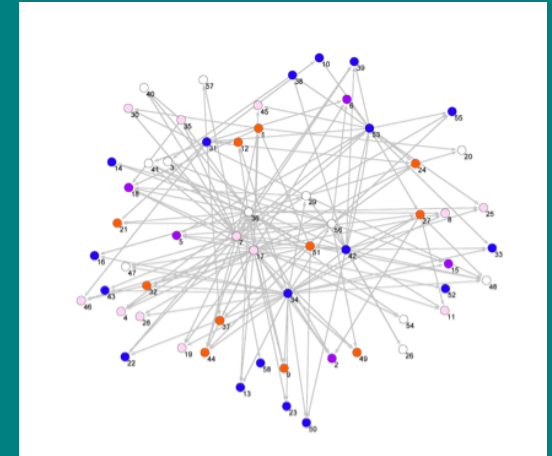
Individuals network



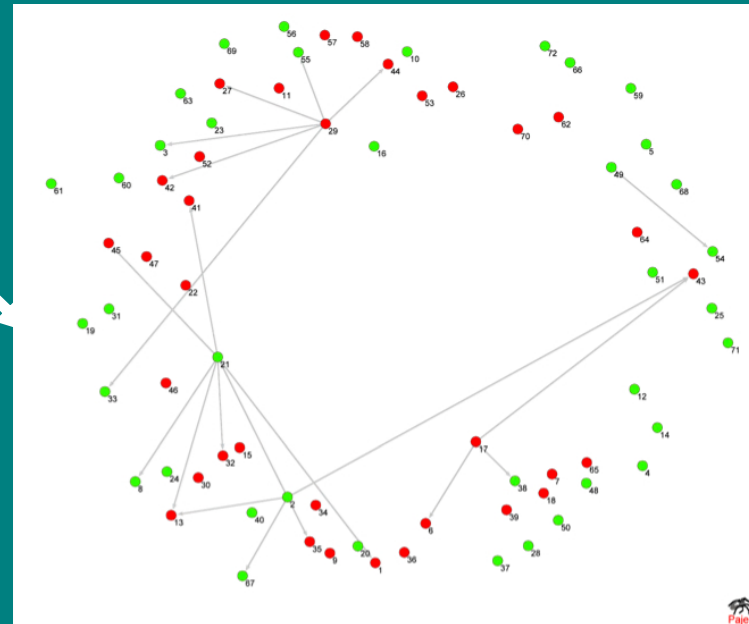
c) Egos & alters (2 cite min)



core



semi-periphery



periphery

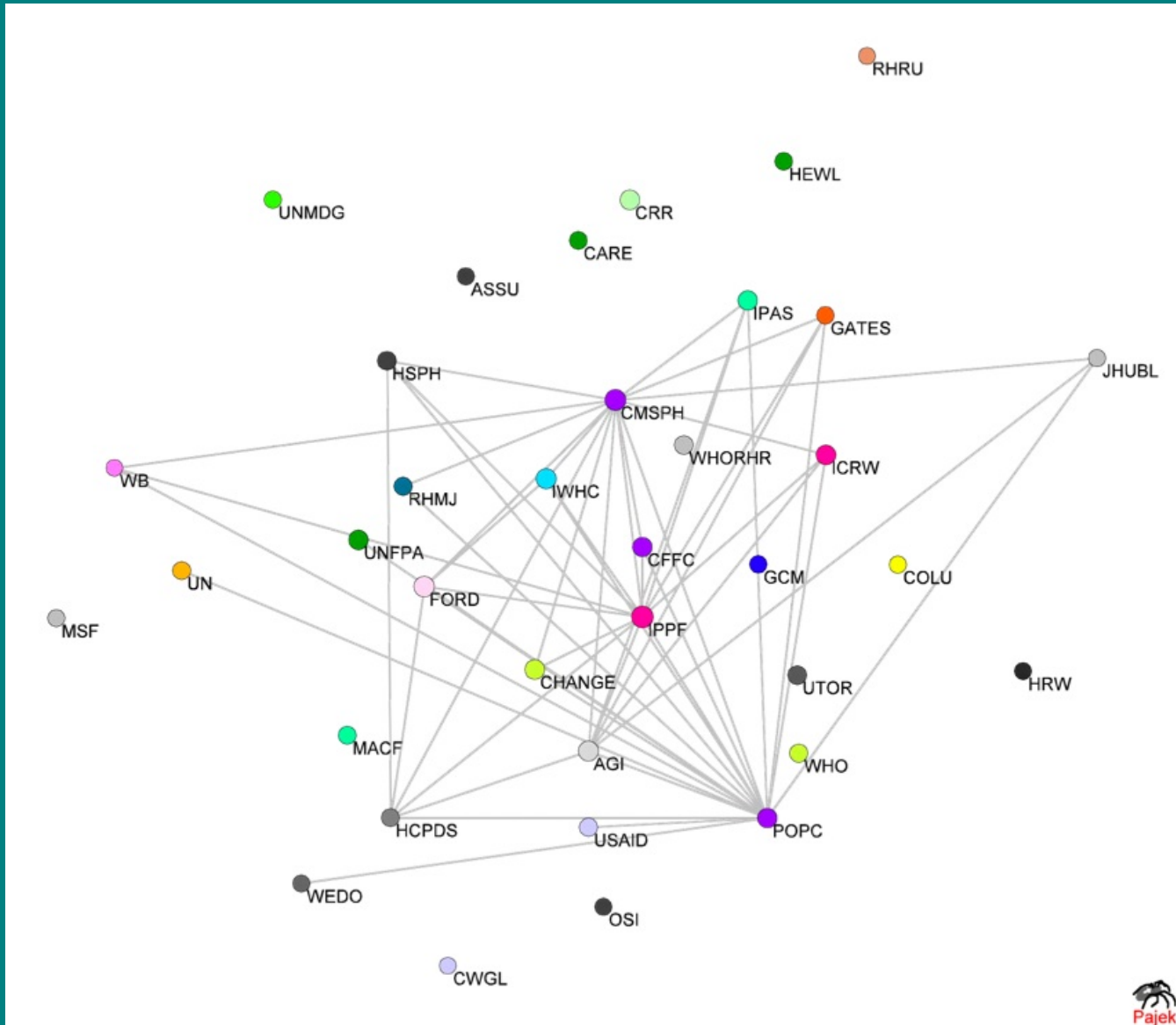
Individuals network

- When grouping individuals by their primary role:
 - Advocates and funders predominate in the core
 - Policy makers and researchers predominate in the semi-periphery
- More connectivity within core/semi-periphery, than periphery

Methods - Organizations network

- Slightly different mapping technique
- Bipartite network where we show *indirect* connections between organizations
- Links between organizations represent *individuals*

Organizations network



Organizations network

- Heterogeneity
- Core organizations are “thinkers” and “agenda setters”
- Core players tend to be located in NYC and DC
- Semi-peripheral organizations are “do-ers”
- Peripheral organizations are bridges to other public health sectors

What is the reproductive health and rights 'field'?

- *“...it's important to define what is ‘the field’... I think that there's a very important, but also not very well-examined connection between reproductive rights and sexual rights, and between reproductive health and sexual health and I see them as both distinct but also as inter-related...”*
 - Interview respondent, August 2006

What is the reproductive health and rights 'field'?

- *“What Cairo did was really **reframe what reproductive health is**. You know, the whole “paradigm shift” thing may sound trite, but it's really true; but that kind of shift in thinking requires really a re-think... and many of the professionals in the field are **still thinking of reproductive health in very biomedical ways...**”*
 - Interview respondent, August 2006

What is the reproductive health and rights 'field'?

- *“I feel like often within the reproductive health field there are these issues that people are familiar with, and are dealing with every day. And it’s trying to forge links perhaps with the non-reproductive-health focused work that is more challenging, but could in fact leverage both sort of fields’ activities more...”*
 - Interview respondent, August 2006

Opportunities and challenges

- Bridges to other fields
 - HIV/AIDS organizations
 - UN MDGs
- Unexpected allies
 - Domestic advocates and coalitions
 - Finding common ground with faith-based actors

Limitations/Caveats

- A snapshot of the field in 2006
 - We acknowledge the field is dynamic; perceptions are fluid; relationships are fluid
- Limited sample size
- North American perspective, based on initial nominations
- We emphasize that this is a cognitive map based on *perceptions* of influence

Reflections on the process

- SNA relatively easy to implement, makes intuitive “sense”
- Technical expertise helpful for understanding measures, terminology, analytical techniques
- Network maps useful for visualizing relationships
- Potentially sensitive information
 - Careful explanation of objectives to respondents
 - Careful data management and storage

Conclusions/Recommendations

- The field of reproductive health and rights is heterogeneous, diverse, dynamic
 - Loose connections within the field
 - Multiple bridges to related fields
- Leverage connections to other fields

Acknowledgements

- Respondents
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