

TO: Big Boss
FROM: Barbara Shaddix
DATE: November 24, 2021
SUBJECT: Test Plan

Introduction:

Throughout this project, I have been examining the “[About](#)” page for the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC). I want to learn how visitors to the site view the NWLC’s mission and goals, and to learn how easy it is for interested users to become involved with the organization’s activism. Do they, for example, provide enough information for users to complete a series of given tasks, and is the necessary information easy to find? If the NWLC “fights for gender justice” as they claim, do they provide any guidance or help for individuals experiencing issues in their own lives (NWLC: About)? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to interrogate the site through a variety of approaches, such as participant summaries, personas, heuristic evaluations, and the upcoming user tests.

The purpose of the scenarios of use are to further examine the activity systems of the NWLC’s own site, taking into consideration the primary types of users which may be drawn to the site. These user types have been drawn from my participant summaries; my interviewees noted that the NWLC works on legislation affecting women and that they use inclusive language which brackets in LGBTQ and other oppressed communities (see Appendix A). Considering this, then, I want to find out if a potential user of the site has the means to find the information they need to complete their task. The “About” page seems a likely starting point, as its purpose is to both inform visitors about the NWLC’s mission and persuade them to support it.

When I began this project, I wanted to find a site which aligned with my own political and social beliefs, and at first impression, the NWLC met that goal. Over the course of this semester, however, I have begun to perceive what I believe are lapses on the part of the NWLC. While the work they do is important, are they committed to the work of gender justice beyond the biological understanding of gender? My CDA heuristic analysis “showed that [the] page has a surprising bias towards cisgendered women” and failed to demonstrate an awareness of transgendered/genderqueer individuals (see Appendix B). The purpose of the scenarios of use is to extend the work of the heuristic evaluations, by examining if users also note the same issues as the CDA analysis; if they find the page easy to understand, use, and navigate (cognitive load); and if they find the NWLC and its site credible (ethos).

Participants & User Tests:

My participants are drawn from my somewhat limited circle of family and friends; my original participant summaries used a wide-flung network of friends who are located throughout the US. The current set of recruits consist of a 54 year old man, who presents an interesting test case as he may be outside the set of intended users for the site; a 16 year old male, whose perceptions should prove interesting; a 20 year old female, who was part of the original set of participants, and two of her friends, who are of similar age and background. It may be possible to include two of my original participants, if they

are willing and able to work with me via Zoom. With the exception of the two friends, all of my participants are known to me personally. The goal is to have all participants complete all three scenarios in order to compile as much data as possible from only five users.

All of the following is located under Appendix C: I have created three scenarios of use: a user who wants to learn more about the NWLC; a user who has suffered gender-based discrimination; and a user who wants to become involved in the NWLC's activism. Before starting, the Five Second test will be administered to determine how the site strikes the user as a quick first impression. Each task starts at the NWLC's "About" page, where users will have to read the page, find the information they're seeking, and follow through with task completion elsewhere on the site. I have two set of metrics, which consists of a set of questions asked before the scenarios and a second set to be asked after the scenarios are completed. Before the test begins, I will ask the user a series of questions to determine what they know or think about the NWLC as well as their position on the effort to champion for women's rights. The second set of metrics occurs after the tasks are completed. Here, I want to learn what the user's impressions are of the NWLC; how they would describe the site; what difficulties they encountered; and questions related to the specific scenarios. These questions include what they learned about the NWLC, the user's opinions about the organization, and the overall usefulness of the site for these tasks.

The tests will be conducted on my personal computer or laptop, depending on location. If at home, I will use my personal computer; if on campus, I will use my laptop. If I am able to conduct user tests over Zoom, I will use Zoom's functionalities, such as screen sharing and recording, to help facilitate the session. All in-person sessions will be recorded on my phone as a video; I will record voices and the screen of the participant, but not their face. The site will be preloaded on the browser, minimized until the test begins. Before beginning, the participant and I will view the "think aloud" demonstration video on YouTube to help them understand what I need them to do. The participant will then be guided through all three tasks. My timeline for completion is over the Thanksgiving weekend as time and circumstance allow.

Conclusion:

These tests look at the site's intended users, the various tasks they may wish to accomplish while there, the tools the site makes available to users, and the relevant social contexts. They have been designed to work with the impressions the NWLC created in the minds of the interviewees for the participation summaries as well as drawing from the information located on the "About" page. By observing participants as they complete the given tasks, I hope to learn how well the NWLC achieves its stated aims of being tireless advocates for the rights of women and other marginalized groups. I also wish to compare and contrast the findings from my heuristic evaluations from users' actual lived experiences and opinions.

Appendix A: Participant Summaries

Participant 1: A single mother with two college-aged daughters, she works as a finance manager at an international company. She sees financial/economical standing as being “very important” for the NWLC’s economic capital as financial inequality is a major issue facing women. Having never heard of the brand, she doesn’t have much of an opinion on their social capital; she notes that there are a variety of ways to contact them, as per the website; she would use email if needed. The NWLC’s cultural capital strikes her as being very positive with their emphasis on legislation that brings about reform in women’s lives. The brand has positive social capital as NWLC “strives for inclusion and diversity,” and uses white, purple, and teal in their logo. The NWLC’s focus on “we,” noting that it implies an organization that views itself as a united team and which is very inclusive of people, “no matter their circumstances,” strikes this participant as good linguistic capital.

Participant 2: A gay, single mother of Native American background, she works for a state agency. This participant is highly skeptical, and it shows throughout her interview. In terms of the brand’s economic capital, she thinks that the brand likely values high economic standing when soliciting donations, but probably not when taking cases, because “it seems like the idea is to achieve economic equity and power for women in the workplace and that should mean all workplaces.” NWLC’s social capital is low, as she has never interacted with anyone from the NWLC, but if she had to communicate, “probably through email or Twitter.” She does not have a strong impression of the brand and would not know how to determine who is a member. NWLC’s educational capital borders on exclusionary in this participant’s eyes, as the NWLC, for her, is associated with lawyers, public policy advocates, fundraisers, non-profit workers, and political/campaign workers. She feels the brand’s social capital, with its focus on diversity, is deliberately vague – “I personally believe that it would be mainly (but not all) Caucasian women” who are trying to “‘reach out and include diverse voices,’ whatever that means.” For NWLC’s cultural capital, she gets “the feeling they represent neo-liberal political and economic values but also genuinely wish to protect women’s interests and rights as a class in the US.”

Participant 3: An Arab transgender college student, she works and lives on campus. She believes that economic capital is “incredibly important” to the NWLC, as “they need to understand that women are going to have less money available to pay for their services due to the wage gap.” She wishes that the website made the cost of using the NWLC as a client clearer. Although the site is well-designed and professional, she notes the heavy reliance on asking for donations from visitors. For this participant, as with the others, the brand has limited social capital. To communicate with the brand, she would first email or phone them, preferring face-to-face for extended contact. The brand has good cultural capital, because they have a “clear drive to help women.” There is some information available about the “intersections with other marginalized communities,” but not much. This participant had no opinion about the educational or symbolic capital of the NWLC.

Participant 4: In her early forties, she is married, has one daughter, and works as an administrative assistant at a state university. She believes that because of the NWLC's focus on gender justice for those who cannot afford it, the economic capital of potential clients is very important to the brand. NWLC's social capital is limited to its social media for this participant. She has never interacted with the brand, but would in general use social media, unless it was a "personal matter," in which case she would use their online form. The website leaves her with a positive impression, but unless an individual is listed on the site as an employee, she wouldn't otherwise know how to recognize a member of the NWLC brand. For this participant, this brand's educational capital focuses employees who are "highly educated," most of whom "have a law degree of some type." The brand has good cultural capital; she learned about the brand's mission through their website, which has been a pleasant experience. She describes the symbolical capital, as represented by the language of the NWLC's tagline ("Justice for her. Justice for all."), as implying gender justice; the site's colors are purple and aqua/turquoise. Finally, NWLC's linguistic capital is inclusive, informative, and not condescending. The site's language focuses on gender justice, including women of color, LGBTQ individuals, and low-income women. The repeated use of their tagline drives "their message and mission home" to visitors. She believes that this is probably an indication of their "main measurable goal – to teach people what they do and what their mission is."

Participant 5: A mother of five, she is currently a financially struggling stay-at-home parent who homeschools her youngest three children. She believes that the NWLC's economic capital guarantees "a woman's stable or equal financial standing would be a core mission." The brand's social capital is low for this participant; having never communicated with the brand, she would choose to phone, email, or use other forms of online communication. She is still learning about the NWLC's cultural capital and would not know who is a member. She assumes that NWLC's educational capital favors employees who have "educational, law, and public policy backgrounds." The brand's symbolic capital is "focused on helping women;" they use purple, teal, and blue with a stylized "w" for "women" as their logo. Although she doesn't know how members communicate with each other, she notes the repeated use of the word "women" as a key piece of the NWLC's linguistic capital and connects it to their focus on "the legal challenges facing women."

Appendix B: Heuristic evaluations

Jones & Williams' CDA Heuristic	Framing	Visual Aids	Foregrounding	Backgrounding	Omission	Presupposition	Discursive Differences
<i>The National Women's Law Center,</i> https://nwl.org/about	<i>The perspective of the text, including visual aids</i>	<i>Privileging/emphasis of certain information</i>			<i>What is left out of the text</i>	<i>Assumptions about the reader & what the reader knows</i>	<i>Changes in voice & register</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented in a plain language style. Important information presented in clickable placards containing informational blurbs Near bottom of page, a blurb grounds the donation ask by restating the NWLC's work A yellow button at the bottom of the page invites the visitor to "Take Action" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large photo banner is positioned above the "About Us" text, featuring the midsections of, apparently, women The clothing/visible bodies all carry cultural significant markers of femininity Diversity in race, sexuality, economic status, and gender presentation not immediately apparent in photo in seeming contradiction of page's claims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NWLC's main mission of "gender justice" is prominently placed at beginning of text The first row of placards contains general information about the NWLC The second row contains information about its employees The third row contains information about work opportunities and ways to contact the NWLC The final row (visually separated from previous rows) has a donation placard & repeats the history placard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further information about the NWLC is hidden behind the clickable placards User involvement hidden behind yellow "Take Action" button 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men are not mentioned anywhere on the page Page does not discuss how the NWLC accomplishes its work How to find help if you are a woman in legal crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumes that most, if not all, of their audience is female gendered Assumes audience knows about "the issues that are central to the lives of women and girls," issues of "gender inequity," and "barriers that harm all of us." Assumes a working knowledge of major legal and policy changes affecting women for the past 50 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The page uses "we," "our," and "the Center" except where the founding (?) members are referred to as "they." Audience is directly addressed only once in the "Contact" placard Avoids the use of overly specialized language except as appropriate (i.e., "courts," "public policy," etc.) Some aggressiveness within the text – "fights," "justice," "break down barriers" Outside the mention of LGBTQ, no mention of trans people

The CDA analysis showed that this page has a surprising bias towards cisgendered women, particularly in the use of the primary visual aid (the banner of women's midsections) and in the failure to explicitly include transgendered/genderqueer individuals in the text. Given the current social climate towards trans/queer people, this omission is both surprising and alarming; how can the NWLC effectively fight for "gender justice" if this fight does not include those who struggle with gender norms? Another surprise within the text was a seemingly performative diversity; no mention is made of the work they've done in support of oppressed communities. There is an unsurprising lack of men; in keeping with their *raison d'être*, the page is focused on women. Although Betty doesn't notice these issues the first time she visits the site, upon reflection, she notes the overall lack of LGBTQ inclusion and decides against sharing the link with her daughter, although she still plans to follow the NWLC's advice on getting involved.

Document Structure		Document Design		Expression	
<i>Gives readers important information first</i>	Yes: mission statement front and center	<i>Uses easy-to-read typefaces at readable sizes</i>	Typefaces are easy-to-read but some text is small	<i>Uses verbs instead of verb nominalizations</i>	Yes: three instances of “leadership”
<i>Only tells readers what they need to know</i>	Information presented is kept brief & to the point	<i>Uses black text on a white background</i>	Some text is white against a blue background. Other text is teal against a white background. Informational blurbs are black against a white background	<i>Uses active voice</i>	Yes: one instance of “is.”
<i>Gives information in digestible chunks</i>	Yes: small, short paragraphs	<i>Uses white space & a modular grid</i>	Information is arranged in a grid; largely white boxes on a blue background	<i>Uses affirmative instead of negative constructions</i>	Yes: no negative construction found
<i>Uses headings</i>	Yes: page uses headings appropriately	<i>Uses graphics as well as text</i>	Limited graphics: logo, banner, and background photo of US Capitol	<i>Uses simple sentences</i>	No: complex sentences throughout
				<i>Uses short, familiar words</i>	Yes: common language
				<i>Keeps subject & verb close together</i>	Yes: most sentences use simple subject-verb construction
				<i>Speaks directly to the reader</i>	Only in one instance: the “Contact” placard

Cheung's Cognitive Load Heuristic

According to Cheung’s Cognitive Load Heuristic, the NWLC “About Us” page avoids excessive cognitive load in most instances. Despite the subject matter, which could easily fall into legalese, the page remains easily readable and understandable. The biggest issue comes with the default font sizes for the placards; in the interests of keeping the visuals compact, the font sizes for the informational blurbs are smaller than necessary. Betty, for example, is of an age to start needing reading glasses for smaller text sizes, and while she is able to read the text, she can’t help but notice the small size. All important text – except for the header text – is written in black against a white background. The header, however, which is a larger, easier-to-read font and size than the rest of the page, is white against a medium blue background. This may place an undue cognitive load on some individuals’ ability to both read and understand the text; Betty experiences no issues with it.

Ethical Proof: Argument from Character Heuristics

Invented Ethos		Establishing Good Character		Securing Goodwill		Situated Ethos	
How does the site establish its cultural standing?	The opening paragraph positions the NWLC as leaders in the fight for gender equality.	What character references are present?	None; very likely available elsewhere on the site.	Does the site consider what the audience needs to know?	The “About Us” page assumes – likely correct – that the audience doesn’t know much about the NWLC.	What is the relative social standing of participants?	The NWLC is likely staffed by highly educated individuals; users may come from all walks of life.
How does the site establish honesty and trustworthiness?	Page provides a way for users who have questions to reach the NWLC either by phone, mail, or online.	Does the site offer up respectable credentials?	According to the page, the NWLC has a Board of Directors, an Advisory Committee, and a staff of over 80 people.	Does it supply the needed information without condescending or repeating known information?	While there are some repeated links (history and donate), the page manages to restate the same basic information without repetition or condensation.	What are the power positions of participants? How does interacting with the site affect power disparities?	Audience members who need to interact with the NWLC do not have same relative power as staff members. Power disparities remain unchanged with interactions.
How does the site show evidence of having done the necessary research?	The page uses the NWLC’s own history to establish credibility in this area.	Does the site show evidence of long experience in their area of expertise?	According to the NWLC, it began in 1972 and has been involved in gender equality issues ever since.	Does it state why its main argument is important, and what benefits the audience may receive from it?	The page establishes the importance of its argument by saying it is “central to the lives of women and girls.” Benefits include cultural changes for all, especially oppressed communities.	How rigid or flexible is power, and does interaction affect its stability?	The power structure appears rather rigid and does not appear to be affected by interaction.
What specialized language is present and is it used correctly?	The page uses specialized language specific to legal issues; it is used corrected.					Is the site in a position to influence participant ideology?	Yes, the page is able to influence the point of view of audience members.

The “About Us” page for the National Women’s Law Center rests most of its appeal to the audience on *ethos*. Modern society largely considers the work of gender equality, social justice, and the reduction of oppression to be meritorious. As that is the principle around which the NWLC is organized, it is unsurprising that they would rely heavily on the ethics of their work as a means to persuade their audience. However, the “About Us” page is lacking in some respects, as it fails to do much in the way of establishing good character. Presumably, such evidence is available elsewhere on the site; still, adding some elements of good character to this page would go a long way in better establishing the *ethos* they wish to present to the reader. However, the page is successful enough to be in the position to positively influence Betty’s ideology with regards to the cultural change that their work requires.

Appendix C: Moderator Script/Scenarios/Metrics/Observation Journal

User Test Scenarios & Notetaker's Guide: *National Women's Law Center*

Date _____ Location _____

Participant # _____ Time _____

Web Site: The National Women's Law Center; <http://nwlc.org/about>

Moderator Script (adapted from Usability.gov)

Welcome and Purpose

Thank you so much for helping me out today. I wanted to give you a little information about what you will be looking at and give you time to ask any questions you might have before we get started.

You will be given a series of tasks which will require that you use the given webpage to try and solve. My goal is to see how easy or difficult you find the site to use.

Test Facilitator's Role

I am here to record your reactions and comments of the Web site you will view.

During this session, I would like you to think aloud as you work to complete the tasks. To understand what I mean, let's watch this brief YouTube video which demonstrates the process of "thinking out loud." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g34tOmyKaMM>)

I will not be able to offer any suggestions or hints, but from time to time, I may ask you to clarify what you have said or ask you for information on what you were looking for or what you expect to have happen.

Test Participant's Role

- There are no right or wrong answers to either the tasks or the questions I ask. If you have any questions, comments, or areas of confusion while you are working, please let me know.
- If you ever feel that you are lost or cannot complete a task with the information that you have been given, please let me know. I will ask you what you might do in a real-world setting and then either put you on the right track or move you on to the next scenario.
- As you use the site, please do so as you would if you were alone.
- I will be recording this session for personal reference. I'll be capturing your voice and what you see on the screen. Your name will not be associated or reported with data or findings from this evaluation, and no one else will view or hear the recording.
- I'll ask you a series of questions before we begin. I may ask you other questions as we go along, and we will have wrap up questions at the end.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Metrics I (pre-test interview; some questions adapted from Usability.gov):

- Have you heard of the NWLC? _____ Yes _____ No
If so, tell me what you know about them. If not, based on their name alone, what do you think the organization is about?
- Who do you think this site is designed for? Why?
- What comes to mind for the term “marginalized” group? What are their characteristics?
- How would you describe the efforts to legally recognize the rights of women and marginalized groups?
- Would you ever consider becoming involved in activist work to achieve cultural and/or legal change?
- Have you ever needed legal assistance to deal with an issue related to some aspect of your identity? If so, how did you find help?

Five Second Test (adapted from NNGroup):

- *To begin, I'd like to show you something on the screen. You don't have to do anything, just look.*

Pull up page and allow participant to look at it for 5 seconds.

- *I know that was quick, but could you describe anything to me that you remember seeing? Anything at all. Take a moment and say it out loud.*

Scenarios

Scenario 1

You recently heard about the NWLC in the news, and your curiosity was piqued. You've visited the NWLC's "About" page to learn more about the organization and to form an opinion about the work they do.

Tasks	Success (Circle 1)	Notes/Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Read the NWLC "About Us" page. Determine which links might provide the most useful information for what you want to learn.▪ Click on the links and read the resulting pages. Follow up on any additional links on those pages which may further help you achieve your goal.	<p>0 Not completed</p> <p>1 Completed with difficulty or help</p> <p>2 Easily completed</p>	

Scenario 2

*You have suffered gender-based discrimination in your workplace/school due to your identity.
You need legal help, and you think the NWLC might be able to help.*

Tasks	Success (Circle 1)	Notes/Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Read the NWLC's "About Us" page. Look for any indication to find legal aid.▪ Read the legal help page. Look for any place to request aid.▪ If desired, complete the form. Only use your actual information if desired.	<p>0 Not completed</p> <p>1 Completed with difficulty or help</p> <p>2 Easily completed</p>	

Scenario 3

Recently, you've become alarmed at the news coming from Texas and other "red" states which seek novel ways to prevent abortion and to punish both abortion-providers as well as people receiving abortions. You want to find a way to become involved in pushing for legal protections for women's reproductive rights.

Tasks	Success (Circle 1)	Notes/Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Read the NWLC "About Us" page. Look for any indications for a way to become a volunteer or to work for the NWLC.▪ Complete the steps. If it is necessary to include your information, feel free to make up your information if you desire.▪ If you found volunteer work, describe what they suggest you do.▪ If you found a paid position, describe the job responsibilities.	<p>0 Not completed</p> <p>1 Completed with difficulty or help</p> <p>2 Easily completed</p>	

Metrics II (post-test interview):

- What is your overall impression of the NWLC?
- If you were to describe this site in a sentence or two, what would you say?
- What, if any, difficulties did you come across?

For the first scenario,

- What were you able to learn about the NWLC?
- What opinion have you formed about them?

For the second scenario,

- In your opinion, how useful is their approach to helping people looking for aid?

For the third scenario,

- What do you think of the NWLC's method of "involvement"?

Finally,

- How easy is it to use the NWLC's site to find what you need?
- What parts of the site were most helpful to you?
- Do you have any other final comments or questions?