

ORGANIZING ON THEIR OWN TERMS:
WOMEN AND THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT IN INDIANA

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of History
Indiana University

June 2003

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

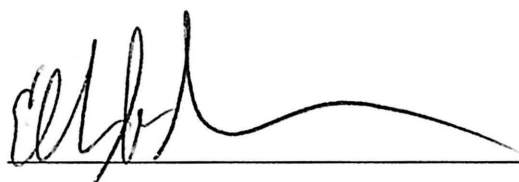
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank several people who have offered their assistance, support, insight and encouragement throughout the process of researching and writing about the Equal Rights Amendment in Indiana. I will always be grateful for the efforts of my many friends, family members, teachers and advisors who have made this project possible.

Many thanks to my thesis committee—Dr. Annie Gilbert Coleman, Dr. Nancy Robertson, and Dr. Ellen Andersen—for their suggestions, insight, and support throughout this process. I am so grateful to Annie, without whom I never would have survived this project with good humor intact. Her efforts have made me a better reader, writer, thinker, and historian. I would like to extend a special thank you to Beth Van Vorst and Jeannie Regan-Dinius, who shared their stories and extensive research about the ERA with me throughout the course of my project.

I am also grateful to the faculty of the Department of History at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, especially Dr. Robert Barrows and Dr. Elizabeth Brand Monroe, for their guidance during this phase of my graduate career. Throughout my courses, internship projects, and thesis work, the Department faculty and staff has always been helpful and supportive. I would also like to thank the many graduate students who made my graduate career so rewarding, particularly Erin Kelley, Jeff Kollath, Lindsey Mintz, and Tina Baich. Their support, friendship, and most of all, their humor, has sustained me throughout many classes, papers, and thesis drafts over the years.

I would also like to thank my colleagues at the Indiana Historical Society, particularly Faith Revell, Martin Douglas, Jeff Mills, Elaine Rosa, Matt McMichael, and Trina Nelson Thomas, for their support and friendship as I pursued my Masters degree. They make my work in the public history field enjoyable and fun, and I hope that my continued learning has made me a better historian, and thus, a better team player.

And finally, I am forever indebted to my family and friends for their support throughout the past four years. My wonderful support group of girlfriends remind me daily of the benefits of women's collective networks and activities and have encouraged my further exploration of the world of women's political activity. The Dungeon and Dragon's boys who basically live at my house have also proven very valuable, as updates on my thesis progress are often met with glassy-eyed stares and confused smiles. Their interest and nice attempt at support has given me the ability to keep things in perspective and remember that for all my studying, I must be able to explain the concepts of the ERA to non-historians who are interested in learning more about their world.

Last but certainly not least, I thank my amazing family, my parents, brother, and sisters, who have encouraged me in my graduate career. To my wonderful husband Lenny, who has patiently waited for me to finish my research and writing and often added colorful commentary on my efforts to learn everything there is to know about an amendment that did not pass. And to my beautiful daughter Maya, who hopefully will grow up knowing about the efforts of women who came before her and valuing what she can contribute to society as a female. Their love, laughter, and support make me so grateful to have such a wonderful family in this world.

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CHAPTER 1

A STATE AND A NATION: INDIANA AND THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

In 1972, almost fifty years after its initial introduction, Congress passed a proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States providing that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex,” and sent it to the states for ratification. The amendment, known as the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), received overwhelming support in both houses of Congress, passing by a vote of 325 to 23 in the House and 84 to 8 in the Senate. A lengthy list of interest groups and national associations, including nearly every major woman’s organization, went on record in support of the ERA. In addition to formal sources of support, numerous major public opinion surveys indicated that the majority of Americans believed that sexual discrimination was widespread and supported the elimination of legal barriers to sexual equality.

Within two days of Congressional approval, six states had ratified the ERA. This trend of quick approval continued for the rest of 1972, and by the end of 1973 a total of thirty states had ratified the amendment. In the following ten years however, what seemed like sure success gradually lost favor with politicians, the press, and the American people. After 1973, significantly fewer states voted to ratify, and the following two years saw only four states vote in favor. No other states ratified the ERA until 1977, when the Indiana General Assembly ratified under intense local lobbying efforts and national media attention. Indiana was the last state to ratify, and did so at a time when popular support for the amendment had significantly waned. In June 1982, the deadline

for ratification of the ERA expired with only thirty-five of the required thirty-eight states having ratified the proposed Constitutional amendment.

As the last state to ratify, Indiana provides an opportunity to examine how the arguments both for and against the amendment changed over time. After the ERA's initial passage, a flurry of traditionally liberal states ratified quickly, moving the discussion to less liberal states in the South and Midwest. National activists did not expect Indiana, a state with a reputation for political conservatism on social issues, to ratify the amendment. ERA supporters in Indiana learned how to tailor their arguments to appeal to the conservative values of the Hoosier politicians and citizens. By the time Indiana ratified in 1977, their arguments focused more on the principle of economic discrimination than a widespread critique of gender relationships in America. By speaking to pragmatic goals, ERA supporters in Indiana appealed to the conservative values of the largely rural state legislators and also claimed victory for the feminist platform of equal rights for women.

An examination of Indiana grassroots organizations and their mobilization both for and against the ERA shows more than how the two sides fought over the amendment. It also provides insight into what motivated some women to become politically organized during the 1970s. The white women who worked to support the amendment organized within their existing network structures, including the already-established League of Women Voters (LWV) and National Organization of Women (NOW), to focus on ERA activity. In a few cases, supporters formed new organizations to specifically work for ratification. The women who worked for the ERA organizations were by and large the same women who participated in other women's groups in Indianapolis. Although black

women in Indianapolis largely supported the amendment, they did not join these ERA organizations. Like their white counterparts, black women during the 1970s organized politically within their traditional social networks. These networks included the pre-existing National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and the Progressive Community Club. These black organizations joined coalitions dedicated to ratification and included support for the ERA in their larger political platform, yet their individual members did not get actively involved in campaign activity.

In contrast to the previously mentioned groups, the predominately white women who opposed the amendment did not generally have these existing networks from which to draw, especially networks experienced in political activity. Housewives, mothers, and/or religious conservatives, these women often heard about the ERA in the media or from likeminded friends who warned of the dangers of the modern feminist movement. These women banded together through church groups and word of mouth, motivated to action out of an expressed desire to preserve the status of the housewife or protect the special role of women in society. Conservative women also made use of their newly created local chapter of STOP ERA. All directives for its membership came from national leader Phyllis Schlafly. Most of the opposition activity came from individual women with some support structure from other conservative organizations and drew heavily on anti-ERA rhetoric from the national level. With white ERA supporters merging already-existing organizations into coalitions, African-American women making use of already-existing organizations without making any changes, and white antirratificationists creating a local branch of powerful national organization, these groups

illustrate the different ways women drew on existing social networks to make the transition from community and religious organizations to more overt political activity.

Indiana was initially considered by national ERA proponents one of the states least likely to ratify the amendment because of its religious and conservative leanings. The Religious Committee for the ERA (a national organization) targeted Indiana as one of five states where religious women needed to make a strong argument for the ERA using traditionalist rhetoric and examples.¹ Indiana's primary ERA activists tended to be of an older generation and employed more conservative tactics than seen elsewhere in the country. This element of traditionalism and relative conservatism, among both opponents and supporters, was a function of Indiana's Midwestern identity and shaped the nature of the ERA debate in Indiana. The largely urban activists appealed to the rural, conservative values of the state legislators during the campaign, creating a dialogue of feminism based on its most pragmatic and least radical aspects.

Understanding the Midwest as a region is a relatively new field of inquiry. Few scholars have definite ideas about what makes the region distinct. People from outside the Midwest consider it mediocre and backwards: a land of farmers and their livestock. The "heartland" provides the country with crucial services and products, and maintains a reputation as a quaint representation of a different era in American history. Historians of the Midwest recognize its lack of the geographic coherence that has informed the

¹ Religious Committee for ERA information sheet, Jane Fribley Manuscript Collection, 1975-1987, M0546, Box 1, Folder 3, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. The four other states were Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, and Florida. Out of the five targeted states, Indiana was the only state where this effort succeeded.

regional identity of the American South, West, and New England.² The terms “Middle West” and “Midwest” emerged during the early 20th century. Prior to that time, the Midwest was known as the West, the Great West, or the Old Northwest. The early history of the Midwest was the mythic story of adventurous pioneers and social experimenters who moved west in search of a promised land. The study of regions coincided with a celebration of things local, and attributed characteristics of particular people to their particular place or region.³ The presence of key historical turning points and cultural watersheds in the South, West, and New England made the study of these regions less amorphous than the study of this “Middle West.” However, further study of this region is necessary to understand the values (be they actual or mythological) that lie in the heart of the country, and the people who hold them dear. The Midwest has many stereotypes, both positive and negative. State boosters have often claimed that Hoosiers are friendly and maintain a strong veneration for family, moral values, and hard work. Detractors have often argued that the Midwest is provincial and unsophisticated, and looks to the East for motivation and direction.⁴ Scholars and historians are trying to understand the roots of these stereotypes that have often colored how Hoosiers define their role as part of the larger United States. They are also now trying to reconcile the

² Current historiography questions the geographic coherence of these regions, but the Midwest is certainly further behind in its definition than these other areas of regional study. For further information on this discussion, see John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen, editors, *Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higgenbotham*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987; Patricia Nelson Limerick, “What on Earth Is The New Western History?” Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Miller II, and Charles E. Rankin, editors, *Trails: Toward a New Western History*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991: 81-88; and Nancy Shoemaker, “Regions as Categories of Analysis,” in the *AHA Perspectives* (November 1996): 7-10.

³ Andrew R.L. Cayton and Susan E. Gray, “The Story of the Midwest: An Introduction,” *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*, Cayton and Gray, editors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001: 5-9.

⁴ James Madison, “The States of the Midwest: An Introduction,” *Heartland: Comparative Histories of the Midwestern States*, James Madison, editor. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988: 1-7.

diversity of the region's immigrants with its reputation for homogeneity. All of these theories and understandings of people living in the Midwest contribute to the understanding of the region and its penchant for conservatism.

According to historian Lana Ruegamer, writers and historians at the end of the 19th century began to address the history of Indiana and the Midwest. She argues that they were motivated to action by a concern that “something valuable and definitively Hoosier was disappearing in the wake of the dramatic new prosperity fostered by the natural gas boom and the concomitant forces of urbanization and industrialization.”⁵ In the early 1900s, historians William H. English, Daniel Wait Howe, and Jacob Piatt Dunn, Jr., joined authors James Whitcomb Riley and Booth Tarkington in studying and writing about Indiana's history. In 1916, author Meredith Nicholson issued an updated version of *The Hoosiers*, his novel that assessed the cultural heritage of the state. He called attention to the “new heroes” in Indiana—urban natives from Indiana who left the state for college and returned home with outside influence and knowledge. These people were different from the rustic countryfolk who occupied the pages of previous authors.⁶

More recently, historian James Madison argues that Indiana's history, and to a large degree the Midwest as a whole, is characterized by a sense of moderation. He argues that Hoosiers have never been all the same, but devotion to small town values, political involvement, and a wariness of the federal government permeated those who lived in the state. The rural/urban split has been a factor in Indiana politics since the early twentieth century. The majority of Hoosiers were rural until the 1920s, when the number

⁵ Lana Ruegamer, *A History of the Indiana Historical Society 1830-1980*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1980: 77.

⁶ Peter T. Harstad, “Indiana and the Art of Adjustment,” *Heartland: Comparative Histories of the Midwestern States*, James Madison, editor. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988: 161-168.

of urban residents passed those living in small towns for the first time. With urban growth came an increased reliance on city services, and a new appreciation of the role of government in society. City life differed from farm life, and the number of people who became socially and politically active dramatically increased. However, Indiana's new urbanites maintained their ties to family and friends living in the rural parts of the state. Madison argues that the existence of so many small towns on Indiana's landscape has created a symbolic midway between urban and rural life that mirrors the identity of its rural residents. Like its physical landscape, change in Indiana has been evolutionary, not revolutionary, and maintains an element of caution in its approach to new things.⁷

Within this larger effort to understand the Midwest and its key actors, early Midwestern women's history has been largely overlooked by scholars. Although the field is certainly expanding, many researchers and authors have previously focused on the activities of New England women as the shapers of American women's history. For Indiana in particular, there is no body of literature clearly identifiable as a historiography of Indiana women. In 1941, journalist Blanche Foster Boruff wrote *Women of Indiana*, the most comprehensive historical study of women in the state. Boruff and her colleagues argued that Midwestern women were pioneers who worked side by side with men. Other authors of that period wrote biographies of Indiana women and the histories of various women's clubs and organizations. They considered themselves amateur historians with feminist goals.⁸ There has, however, been significant growth in the field of Indiana women's history, particularly since the 1970s. Although the biographies of activists and

⁷ James Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986: Introduction, 175-179, 317-321.

⁸ Nancy Gabin, "Fallow Yet Fertile: The Field of Indiana Women's History." *Indiana Magazine of History* XCVI, no. 3 (September 2000): 213-215.

reformers continued to be popular topics for authors, a new crop of scholarship began looking at rural women and how they participated in society. Kathleen Blee's 1991 book, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, focused on Indiana women and their relation to the male-dominated world of Klan politics.⁹ A growing number of scholars are looking at the rural women of the Midwest who have played valuable roles in municipal housekeeping, voluntary organizations, and community development.¹⁰ The experience of rural women in these types of organizations shaped how some Indiana women during the 1960s and 1970s entered and participated in the political arena.

Women within the region held a wide variety of personal and political opinions on the role of women in society. In addition to the women who subscribed to traditional gender roles and opposed the feminist ideals of the 1970s, a large number of women in Indiana actively supported the growing women's movement. Between these two groups of women appeared a dialogue about the proper role of women in Hoosier culture. For the most part, the dialogue was rooted in economics, employment, and public policy, creating a debate centered on the more conservative principles of the feminist movement. It was on these terms that the ERA activists in Indiana successfully convinced state legislators that the ERA was acceptable on its own merit.

Indiana's timely ratification of the ERA and the many issues included in the statewide debate can add to the developing notion of Midwestern feminism. Although the amendment was successful in Indiana, an examination of the state campaign offers ways to understand the ERA's failure on the national level. Even before the 1982 deadline,

⁹ Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

¹⁰ Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and Wendy Hamand Venet, editors, *Midwestern Women: Work, Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997: ix-xi.

feminists, historians, and social scientists began searching for the causes of the amendment's declining support. Early scholars believed that the ERA failed at the national level because of the difficulty of the amendment process itself. In 1979, Janet Boles, a government professor at the University of Texas, described what had happened since 1972 to shift the public perception and legislative assessment of the ERA. In *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment: Conflict and the Decision Making Process*, Boles explained that politicians tend to dislike policies that generate such high emotions, and that in voting against the amendment, state legislators were actually voting against the political and social conflict. At the time of her writing, understanding of the ERA had shifted from that of a basic principle of equality to something that threatened the moral fiber of American society. Scholars could already see that perceptions of the ERA and what it represented had everything to do with its failure to win support in state legislatures. Writing in 1979, Boles saw the ERA debate as an expression of the clash between two important social movements, feminism and the emerging New Right.¹¹

Following the ERA's failure to ratify, Vicky Randall's 1987 *Women and Politics: An International Perspective*, complements Boles' work by discussing key errors feminists made as they tried to work within the political system. She argues that single-issue focus and an ideology rooted in middle-class Protestant culture prevented ERA groups from reaching across lines of race and culture.¹² In 1986, the earliest popular study of the ERA came from historian and lawyer Mary Frances Berry. In *Why We Lost the ERA: Politics, Women's Rights, and the Amending Process of the Constitution*, she

¹¹ Janet Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment: Conflict and the Decision Making Process*. New York: Longman, Inc., 1979.

¹² Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987.

blames the amendment process itself, and the supporters' misunderstanding of it, for the lack of success in ratification. Berry argues that ERA supporters did not make a strong enough case for the national necessity of an equal rights amendment for women. Polls indicated that women's first concerns were equal pay for equal work, equal rights in general, and job discrimination. However, an equal rights amendment ranked only sixth place on their list of priorities. Berry believes that this inability to connect the ERA with actual problems of inequality caused many women to view the ERA as inapplicable to their lives.¹³

Also in 1986, a political scientist and sociologist at Northwestern University published what is often considered the most comprehensive early examination of the political causes of the failure. Jane Mansbridge's *Why We Lost the ERA* expands the analysis of the ERA by examining both the amendment process and the political context of the feminist movement.¹⁴ She agrees with Berry's explanation that the Constitution is hard to amend, and even more so in the face of an organized opposition. Mansbridge also argues that the Supreme Court's movement towards stricter interpretation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment weakened the case for the ERA by raising questions as to its necessity. In combining a look at public attitudes (particularly in conservative areas) toward the federal government, the amendment process itself, and the organization of the opposition, Mansbridge suggests that what is surprising is that the amendment came so close to success. Mansbridge explains that the only reason supporters were so successful was their ability to keep the focus on the principle of equal

¹³ Mary Frances Berry, *Why ERA Failed: Politics, Women's Rights, and the Amending Process of the Constitution*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

¹⁴ Jane Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Early authors focused on the amendment process itself or the larger context of the national political climate.

rights. Once opponents raised awareness of the broader social ramifications, popular support for the amendment waned.¹⁵ Because of this increased focus on the social questions raised by the amendment, no state, except Indiana, ratified the amendment after 1975. Indiana, as a case study, questions many of the observations and political assumptions made by these early scholars because it had a very different ERA experience than any other state.

Those works, key to the historiography on the Equal Rights Amendment, all focused on the legislative process at the national level. The authors argued that the process of adding an amendment to the Constitution was so difficult that a controversial amendment such as the ERA was destined to fail. Although this may be true, this argument overlooks the fact that more states ratified the amendment than did not. The distinct nature of those statewide campaigns and their particular ideological battles provides more insight into how women understood the ERA than the national examinations of its failure. In 1990, Donald Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart published a model study on the ERA and community activity. Their work, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of the ERA: A State and A Nation*, looked at the intense and lengthy battle over the ERA that occurred in North Carolina. This case study approach allowed the authors to look for trends based on the primary local actors, their methods, and their underlying ideologies. They looked at how the ERA debate played out in the state legislature, and the arguments made by both supporters and opponents.¹⁶ They argue that the ERA debate cannot be divided by state boundaries, or even regional boundaries, and that the arguments heard in North Carolina were the same ones used across the country.

¹⁵ Ibid, 4-5, 20-28.

¹⁶ Donald Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of the ERA: A State and a Nation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

What is distinct, however, is the specific story of these individual state campaigns. These state experiences helped put North Carolina and Indiana on opposite sides of the ratification line. Mathews' and De Hart's work points to a growing need to look at the ERA at a local level and to focus on the distinct aspects of local circumstance and regional personality in order to understand why the campaign ended with different results in state legislatures across the country.

An examination of Indiana fits into this model by focusing on the narrative of the state ERA campaign and a detailed analysis of the key grassroots organizations involved. The story of the ERA in Indiana illustrates how one distinct state campaign played out, and the significance of grassroots organizations and their tactics to its success. These local grassroots organizations, both for and against the amendment, crafted rhetoric and activities designed to appeal to local issues and personalities. Supporters created a form of Midwestern feminism that focused on different aspects of the amendment than seen elsewhere in the county, and challenged Indiana's reputation as a state that would oppose the amendment.

Within the ERA's historiography, another layer of analysis looked at the grassroots organizations that surrounded the debate. Most of these works incorporate the feminist scholarship of Jo Freeman, whose 1975 book *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process*, is often considered the benchmark for understanding the feminist movement. Her analysis of women's social networks and how they related to political activity explained the origins of many women's organizations that became involved in the ERA campaign. Her discussion of the generational split between feminists into younger and

older groups helped examine the politics of the ERA according to what it meant to women at different life stages.¹⁷ Indiana's organizations fit squarely into this model.

By contrasting the student activities of feminists from Indiana University in Bloomington with the tactics of the LWV members in Indianapolis, one can see a definite generational difference between various ERA supporters. This thesis will include the Bloomington activists, but will focus on the women from Indianapolis who made a conscious decision to participate in the ERA struggle from their positions as wives, mothers, and business professionals in their middle lives. The existing social networks that led middle-aged women to ERA activity often played a key role in how these women became politically active.

Involvement on the part of Indiana's African-American population also informed the state's brand of feminism. Historians and social scientists have understood the campaign over the ERA as a predominately white movement. This is true to a large degree in that the organizations that actively lobbied both for and against the amendment had an almost exclusively white membership. However, the amendment generally received larger support from black men and women than from whites. A 1976 poll of voters in the Midwestern state of Missouri found that 83 percent of blacks favored the ERA as compared with 55 percent of whites.¹⁸ During the period of civil rights activity in the 1960s, it is understandable that many blacks would feel a certain connection to a movement focused on fighting for equal rights under the law. What is somewhat more

¹⁷ Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975.

¹⁸ Cathy Sedgewick and Reba Williams, "Black Women and the Equal Rights Amendment," *The Black Scholar* 7 (July-August 1976): 26.

problematic to understand, however, is why the ERA campaign was apparently such an overtly white movement.

Several authors have questioned the commonly held notion that black women did not participate in the feminist movement. One 1976 article, “Black Women and the ERA,” examined the way black women interacted with the feminist movement, and argued that black women had more to gain than white women by the passage of the amendment.¹⁹ The authors made a strong connection between sexual discrimination and the low employment, poverty, and the overall plight of the black woman in America and encouraged black women to make ERA an issue for the black community. Bernice McNair Barnett’s “Black Women’s Collectivist Movement Organization: Their Struggle Against the Doldrums” discusses the combination of race and gender as a unique form of oppression in American society, and argues that judging black women because they did not elevate gender over race for their activism misunderstands the way black women saw their roles in society.²⁰ Deborah Grey White in *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994*, and Paula Giddings in *Where and When I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* challenge readers to rethink traditional understandings of women’s history to account for black women’s struggle with racial discrimination as well.²¹ These works all argue that black women did participate in the ERA struggle, although not through the same channels as the other activists. African Americans worked from within their existing networks and

¹⁹ Ibid, 25-29.

²⁰ Bernice McNair Barnett, “Black Women’s Collectivist Organization: Their Struggle Against the Doldrums,” *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of a New Women’s Movement*, Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, editors. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

²¹ Deborah Grey White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999; Paula Giddings, *Where and When I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984.

organizations to support and advocate ERA ratification. The role of black women in the ERA campaign has more to do with the historic separation between black and white women's social networks than it did the issue of the ERA itself. In Indiana, black woman's organizations supported the ERA coalitions, yet the number of black women who actually participated in ERA activities appears to be quite small. This indicates that the national trend held true for Indiana—that although African-American women in the state supported the amendment, they did not work on its behalf with the same degree of focus as their white counterparts.

The women who opposed the amendment organized along yet another set of social networks and they applied different political strategies than either of the above groups. A fascinating and quickly growing area of scholarship looks at these women who opposed the ERA in the context of the emerging New Right. In their pioneering 1975 work, "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Political Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement," political scientists Kent Tedin and David Brady at the University of Houston collected data on women who opposed the amendment in Texas, and analyzed the statistics according to their relationship to the emerging New Right and its categories of ideology (religious fundamentalism, anti-government federalism, and a more race-related segregationalism).²² Two years later, they added data from amendment supporters in Texas to the previous work in order to compare the demographics and ideology of supporters and opponents.²³ A detailed discussion of how Phyllis Schlafly's STOP ERA organization reacted to the ideology of the ERA activists appears in sociologist Susan

²² Kent Tedin and David Brady, "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Political Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement," *Social Science Quarterly* 56 (Jun-Mar 1975/1976): 564-575.

²³ Kent Tedin, David Brady, et al., "Social Background and Political Differences Between Pro- and Anti-ERA Activists," *American Politics Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (July 1977): 395-406.

Marshall's "Confrontation and Co-Optation in AntiFeminist Organizations." She looks at the organizational structure and the broad ideological platform of conservative groups to argue that Schlafly's groups did not conform to traditional understanding of countermovements as reactionary, and that Schlafly instead employed sound political policies and organizational strategies in her activism.²⁴ Kathleen McCourt's work, *Working Class Women and Grassroots Organization*, analyzes how community activism turned into political activism among conservative women in Chicago. Although she is not interested in the ERA per se, her models show the same uses of social networks employed by the anti-ERA women in the Midwest.²⁵ The growing body of literature on the New Right provides context for the motivations of Indiana's anti-ERA activists who used a variety of conservative arguments and an individualistic organizational structure to lobby against the amendment in the state.

All three of the categories of women's groups exhibited an element of traditionalism and relative conservatism that created a unique atmosphere for the ERA debates in Indiana. Although the presence of the NOW among ERA supporters brought participants of different backgrounds together across lines of age, class, and sexual orientation, the activity in Indianapolis relied heavily on the older, middle- to upper-class white women found in the LWV and other such organizations. Indiana supporters made arguments rooted in the principles of anti-discrimination and did not often come down on the more radical side of feminist politics. For this reason, their arguments steered clear from the discussions of gender roles in society and criticisms of the patriarchal system that

²⁴ Susan Marshall, "Confrontation and Co-Optation in AntiFeminist Organizations," *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of a New Women's Movement*, Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, editors. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995: 323-335.

²⁵ Kathleen McCourt, *Working Class Women and Grassroots Organization*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.

became so threatening in other states, and created a sizable body of support among a receptive legislature. This element of Midwestern identity made Indiana's feminist movement a much more palatable presence than the radicals featured on the nightly news. The women who opposed the amendment maintained this element of relative conservatism as well. The arguments of Hoosier women focused on traditional notions of women's roles and state's rights, and in many cases blurred the lines between what was "feminist" and what was not. They created a group that opposed the ERA with the argument that women deserved and needed protective and special legislation for women. The anti-ERA activists in Indiana believed that until society offered equality for women in areas such as employment, education, and the value society attaches to the jobs that women traditionally hold, the laws still needed to offer women an extra layer of protection. When combined with the relative conservatism of the Hoosier supporters, the rhetoric of their opponents helped create an Indiana campaign that, although it was still a difficult battle, was much less polarized than in other states. This element of traditionalism among proponents and opponents made Indiana's ERA debate different from other states and supports the argument for a distinct brand of Midwestern feminism.

Before beginning the analysis of the groups involved in Indiana's ERA campaign, this thesis will provide a narrative of the events surrounding the amendment's ratification. Chapter Two will explore what happened in Indiana between the ERA's 1972 federal passage and the 1977 state ratification in the context of the national debate. This chapter will rely heavily on governmental records, manuscript collections, and newspaper accounts that specifically detail the history of the ERA in the state. This

discussion will also introduce the distinct regional characteristics that make Indiana a good case study for Midwestern politics.

The discussion will then focus on the various grassroots organizations that participated in the dialogue. Three subsequent chapters will expand on the players introduced in Chapter Two and compare the mobilization of white supportive organizations, black women's organizations, and opposition groups. These three chapters all look at grassroots organizations in terms of social network structure and political activity. Chapter Three will rely on organizational records, individual collections, and oral histories to examine how women made use of existing social networks to organize for political activity in support of the ERA. It will argue that Indiana's supporters were already politically active within local women's organizations and built on these existing networks to focus on ERA ratification. Chapter Four will examine the role of black women in the conflict, who, although supportive, did not play a significant role in the ERA campaign in Indiana as in other parts of the country. This chapter will examine the records of the existing black women's political organizations to see how black women saw themselves in relation to the activities surrounding the ERA. The predominately white women's organizations that worked for ratification realized a need for black participation, yet the two groups did not come together because activists were unable to overcome the historic separation between black and white women's groups in Indianapolis. Chapter Five will focus on the activities of white women who opposed the ERA. Conservative women in Indiana did not create organizations to the same degree as the supporters, rather they made use of existing social and religious networks to convey the messages of national activists on the Indianapolis stage. The various arguments made

by Hoosier women both for and against the amendment show a state divided, but not bitterly polarized, which stands in stark contrast to many other states.

Chapter Six will examine differences between these groups to draw conclusions about the Indiana campaign over the Equal Rights Amendment during the 1970s. This chapter will look at the relative conservatism of all these groups, with the possible exception of the black women, to argue that the distinct aspects of the Midwest as a region shaped the conflict and determined the arguments and tactics of all sides. This section will discuss the rural, urban, religious, and racial demographics of the different activist groups in order to explore the place of women in Indiana's conservative politics.

The political activism on both sides of the debate built on existing social network structures to organize and affect change. An exploration of what happened in this particular state can only add to the current understandings of feminism, grassroots activism, and Midwestern politics. Indiana was not expected to ratify, yet did so at an odd time in the amendment's history. The way women on all sides of the debate organized for political activity shaped the arguments and tactics they employed. These arguments and tactics in turn created a distinct brand of Midwestern feminism defined by the arguments made and tactics used to appeal to the conservative legislators, that allowed the ERA debate to focus on issues of economics and actual discrimination, as compared with other states where the debate became a broader argument over the role of women in society. This pragmatic attention to the actual implications of the ERA allowed Indiana to ratify the amendment without abandoning its conservative roots as a state. This balance of conservative politics with progressive notions of individual liberty created an environment where ERA supporters and Indiana legislators could agree.

CHAPTER 2

HOSTILE TERRITORY OR RECEPTIVE TO REFORM?: INDIANA'S POLITICAL PROFILE DURING THE 1970S

The Equal Rights Amendment rested on the belief that gender should not determine the legal rights of men or women. The amendment was to be tangible evidence that all governments—federal, state, and local—were committed to equal treatment under the law. By the late 1970s, however, many Americans associated the ERA with the tumult of the Civil Rights era and recent dramatic social changes. It became, according to many scholars, a referendum on the 1960s and its threats to the traditional social fabric of America.²⁶ While the text of the ERA strictly applied to discrimination by federal and state governments, opponents of the amendment viewed the concept of equality in unexpected ways. Increasingly vocal opponents argued that the amendment would not only alter traditional gender roles, but also remove laws designed to protect women and their place in American culture.

On the heels of the optimism of the 1960s, political observers expected that the ERA would be ratified long before the March 1979 deadline. Twenty-two state legislatures ratified within the first year, which seemed to illustrate national support for gender equality. In the following years, however, the amendment's momentum sharply decreased. In the states that had yet to ratify, the ERA became a hotly contested issue for state legislators and lobbyists. It is in the political rhetoric of these state campaigns that the true story of the ERA unfolds.²⁷

²⁶ Mathews and De Hart. 172-174.

²⁷ Boles, 3-5.

The state campaign over the ERA in Indiana follows the exact opposite trajectory from the rest of the country. When Congress first ratified the amendment, Indiana had a national reputation for conservative politics and traditional opinions with regard to social change. Early state votes on the ERA showed a majority of state legislators opposed the ERA. However, as the decade wore on, ERA proponents increasingly organized and lobbied on behalf of the amendment. Indiana ratified the ERA in 1977, becoming the first state to do so in two years. After Indiana's ratification, no other state voted to pass the amendment. It is important to look at the combination of Indiana's political environment, its history with regard to social activism, and the specific tactics used by proponents of the amendment in order to understand why Indiana reversed trends followed by the nation.

By the 1970s, the Equal Rights Amendment was not a new idea. Discussions of gender and its appropriate societal definitions permeated public discourse at several key intervals in twentieth century American history. During the suffrage movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American women advocated increased public opportunities for women and discouraged restrictions based on sex. In 1920, the same year that the major women's organizations persuaded two-thirds of the states to approve women's suffrage, these women's groups began to discuss an Equal Rights Amendment. Alice Paul and her militant National Woman's Party proposed a constitutional amendment. Introduced in Congress in 1923, the original ERA read: "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate

legislation.”²⁸ At the beginning, many of the mainstream women’s organizations opposed the ERA, on the grounds that it would invalidate the protective legislation that social reformers like Florence Kelley had worked to secure for women workers. This protective legislation—laws affecting such issues as working hours, conditions, and pay—often applied specifically to women and children who were thought to require different protections than their adult male counterparts. Women and children during the early 20th century often worked in deplorable conditions such as unskilled factory labor. Although conditions for men working in the same environment were equally horrible, society at the time acknowledged that women and children deserved special protection. The ERA threatened to invalidate the laws protecting women and children in the workplace. The version introduced to Congress in 1923, and for many years thereafter, was opposed by a coalition of Progressive organizations and labor unions, and consequently met repeated defeat in Congress.

During the 1930s, the National Association of Women Lawyers and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs decided to sponsor the ERA, and in 1940 the Republican Party placed ERA support on its platform. Four years later, the Democratic Party endorsed the amendment as well, despite a backlash from its labor constituency. In 1950 and 1953, the U.S. Senate passed the amendment for the first time. The Senate passed a version of the bill, however, that included the “Hayden rider,” a controversial clause that prevented the amendment from impairing any “rights, benefits, or exemptions” that applied to women. In both years, the House of Representatives recessed without a vote on the ERA, preventing its final passage. Protective legislation clauses similar to the Hayden rider continued to plague the ERA into the future. On

²⁸ Mansbridge, 8.

principle, feminist organizations opposed any clause that weakened the language of true equality. They believed that these protective measures had long been used to justify holding women to a different standard than men.²⁹

In the 1950s and 1960s, as opportunities for women increased, so too did the dissatisfaction of many women with the restrictions placed on them on account of gender. The involvement of many women in the liberation struggles of the 1960s brought a new understanding of equality and self-worth to many female activists across the country. This renewed feminist movement attacked the legal classification based on sex that permeated many federal, state, and local laws. These women argued that the rights of women as individuals were threatened by the assumption that they could only appear before the law as wives and mothers. According to these activists, in treating women differently than men, the laws perpetuated the “separate but equal” problem that had afflicted blacks in America.³⁰

Opponents of the ERA argued that a new amendment was not needed. They cited several laws that already addressed gender discrimination. There were subtle differences in the many pieces of legislation used by these opponents that make this argument somewhat complex. Although women in theory were covered under the Fifth Amendment (“Due Process”), prior to the Civil War state governments tended to operate independently of the Constitution. State governments were free to infringe on many rights, and often treated various groups—women included—as unequally as they wished. After the Civil War, the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments ensured that the Constitution would more adequately protect the rights of

²⁹ Ibid, 8-9.

³⁰ Mathews and De Hart, 33-34.

all male citizens. Although the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Amendments apply specifically to discrimination based on race, the Fourteenth Amendment was much broader. This amendment encompassed the fundamental rights of citizenship, and for that reason is often referred to as the “equal protection clause.”³¹ However, the amendment specifies “male” in its terminology, thus alienating women from its protection guarantee. In the very first Supreme Court decision to find out whether the Fourteenth Amendment protected women from discrimination, Supreme Court Justice Bradley ruled that “Civil law, as well as nature herself, has always recognized a wide difference in the respective spheres and destinies of man and woman...it is within the province of the (state) legislature to ordain what offices, positions, and callings shall be filled and discharged by men.”³² Not until the late 1970s did the Supreme Court begin firmly applying the equal protection clause to women. At this point the Court no longer accepted gender as a classification system that could be used to discriminate against groups of people.³³

During the 1960s, in addition to the Supreme Court’s new interpretation of existing laws, Congress enacted new laws. In 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, requiring equal pay for equal work. However, this act contained no provisions for enforcement, and excluded several categories of employment where gender discrimination existed. The following year, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act barred sex discrimination in employment. It took several years for enforcement of the provision to take effect, but by the end of the decade, women made significant advancements in the

³¹ Leslie Friedman Goldstein, *The Constitutional Rights of Women: Cases in Law and Social Change*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989: 3-5.

³² *Ibid*, 71-72. The case in question is *Myra Bradwell v. State of Illinois*, 83 U.S. (16 Wall.) 130 (1873).

³³ *Ibid*, 110-111, 165-178. The case in question is *Craig v. Boren*, 429 U.S. 190 (1976).

area of employment.³⁴ However, many women did not feel that addressing each specific area of discrimination with individual laws and provisions was effective. Feminists began to view a sweeping Equal Rights Amendment as the only way to enforce gender equality in all aspects of society.

On February 17, 1970, a group of women interrupted a hearing of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments to demand that it consider the Equal Rights Amendment. The Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women sent a report to President Richard Nixon seeking his support for ratification. The report argued that an ERA would fill an "egregious void in constitutional law" and guarantee equality of rights with respect to such things as inheritance, property rights, employment, divorce, and governmental action.³⁵ They stated that an ERA would not, however, weaken laws against rape, change personal attitudes, or force women to do things for which they were physically unsuited. In April, the United Auto Workers' convention voted to endorse the ERA, ending years of staunch labor opposition.³⁶ On May 5, 1970, Senator Birch Bayh (D-Ind.), chair of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, addressed the appeals of these women and began hearings on the ERA. These hearings addressed the issues raised by the Citizens' Advisory Council report with only a minimal amount of opposition. Most of the seven hundred pages of testimony were favorable to ratification, and the committee referred the amendment favorably to the Judiciary Committee without a single dissenting vote. The House of Representatives passed the ERA by a vote of 350 to 15.

³⁴ Ibid, 112-113.

³⁵ Mathews and De Hart, 35.

³⁶ Mansbridge, 10.

The precise wording of the ERA became problematic during the following two sessions of Congress. The amendment ultimately failed during the 1970 session of Congress. The following year the amendment debate continued. Senator Bayh worked with the feminist organizations to craft a bill that would “recognize the need for a flexible standard” on the issue of protective legislation, particularly in regard to women and the military. However, any attempt to add provisions to the ERA that exempted women from any of the responsibilities of citizenship on account of gender violated the feminists’ intent in their struggle for true equality. In 1971, under the urging of the proponent organizations, the House voted 354 to 23 to adopt the original ERA minus any protective legislation additions. In the Senate, North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin, an ardent ERA opponent, introduced eight protective legislation amendments. All failed. On March 22, 1972, the Senate passed the amendment 84-8.³⁷

Within two days of Congressional approval, six states had ratified the ERA and by the end of 1973 a total of thirty states followed suit.³⁸ After 1973, the ERA experienced a dramatic decline in approval, resulting in the ratification of only four states in the following two years. In 1977, the Indiana General Assembly became the last state to ratify the amendment. Although the ERA ultimately failed, Indiana’s ratification at such a pivotal part of the amendment’s history is key to understanding the importance of state politics to the national debate.

Prior to 1977, national activists agreed that Indiana, a state long known for political and social conservatism, would be an area of high conflict. Many political observers did not expect the state to ratify at all. In 1970, Indiana had the fifth largest

³⁷ Ibid, 10-14.

³⁸ Linda Seward, “The Equal Rights Amendment Campaign in Indiana: A Study of Ideas and Arguments.” Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 1991: 101-110.

farm population in the country, pointing to a high number of rural residents in the state. Ninety-eight percent of Hoosiers were native-born Americans, and the immigrant groups represented in Indiana tended to be of backgrounds with strong ties to socially conservative religious groups, including the many Germans, Eastern Europeans, and Mexican Americans who lived in the state.³⁹ These demographics painted Indiana as a state that would resist change and take a conservative stand on social issues. A national survey in 1971 ranked the Indiana General Assembly fortieth among the fifty states in “legislative capability and effective response to substantive issues.”⁴⁰ Indiana’s affirmative vote on the ERA was one of the most unexpected victories of the national campaign.

Although Indiana maintained a reputation for political conservatism due to the Republican Party’s long hold on local and state offices, a closer look at Indiana’s political environment showed that Hoosiers were actually quite receptive to reform movements. Indianapolis, in particular, possessed active, well-developed political organizations, spanning both parties and a range of interest groups. Indiana enjoyed highly competitive political campaigns and elections throughout its history as a state. Reform issues became prominent in the city in the 1830s and 1840s, when moral reform concerned many “progressive” Americans. Indiana organizations lobbied for prison reform, abolition, women’s rights, public education, and public health. Indiana fought as part of the Union during the Civil War, and participated patriotically during both World Wars. Veteran’s groups, including the American Legion that established its national headquarters in

³⁹ U.S. Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Indiana. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census), 1983. Similar numbers and statistics are included in Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History*, 236.

⁴⁰ Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History*, 310. Madison cites a 1971 “Citizens Conference on State Legislatures” as the national survey.

Indianapolis, promoted local observances of patriotism and American pride. In yet another groundswell of political activism, the Ku Klux Klan enjoyed an unprecedented amount of power in local politics during the 1920s, in part due to the antiestablishment political rhetoric that criticized the failure of local leaders to promote public works. The Klan's political machine in Indianapolis had significantly waned by 1930, when the onset of the Great Depression produced a voting shift towards the Democratic Party.

Indianapolis also saw rapid growth and increasing political involvement on the part of labor unions at this time. All of these examples point to an active political arena with ties to a working class, rural value system. Although these organizations and reform groups range from progressive to conservative (and sometimes reactionary) in their political persuasion, Hoosiers have a history of participation in lively political debates and organizations that work for change.

Despite this active participation in reform societies and relief agencies, Indianapolis gained a reputation for political conservatism. High profile Indianapolis businessmen became vocal spokesmen for free enterprise and patriotic causes during the 1930s and 1940s. The city voted for Republican Wendell Willkie in the 1940 presidential election and against the New Deal policies of President Roosevelt. Indiana largely supported patriotism and civic activities during World War II, and during the Cold War of the 1950s, Indianapolis groups promoted economic and political ideas identified with American beliefs. The rapid suburbanization of Indianapolis during the late 1950s and 1960s dramatically altered the demographics of Indianapolis' residents. As middle-class voters moved out of the older neighborhoods inside city limits, they were replaced by other groups that supported the Democratic Party. These groups included new immigrant

populations from Eastern Europe and Latin America, a large white community from the upland South, and the rapidly growing African-American community.

In a state where rural populations often resisted urban growth, the state politics at times seemed to represent two distinct cultures. Sixty-one percent of Hoosiers lived in urban areas in 1970, continuing a slow rural-to-urban migration that began in 1920.⁴¹ The Indiana General Assembly failed to redistrict from 1921 to 1962, eventually giving disproportionate power to rural interests. The 1971 survey of state legislatures criticized Indiana's politicians as "inadequately informed, overly partisan, and too tied to rural constituencies."⁴² Politicians were accustomed to appealing to statewide voting trends that leaned toward conservatism and traditional society values.

In Indianapolis, a reorganized Republican Party appeared in the mid-1960s, eventually capturing the mayor's office in 1967 with a youthful Richard Lugar. Lugar used his popularity and Republican strength in the newly reapportioned Indiana General Assembly to create a partially consolidated city-county government known as Unigov. Unigov restructured many government functions to make them more efficient, and united the city of Indianapolis and Marion County for the purposes of electing a mayor and council. Opposed by inner-city residents who saw this as a way to minimize the voices of Indianapolis residents in order to protect the interests of suburban voters, Unigov and the post-1966 Republican stronghold on Indiana offices gave the state a reputation as a bastion of Republican strength.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid, *The Indiana Way: A State History*, 235.

⁴² Ibid, *The Indiana Way: A State History*, 310.

⁴³ George Geib, "Politics." *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. David J. Bodenhammer and Robert G. Barrows, editors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994: 161-169.

Although their penchant for conservative politics is clear, Indiana residents have not been hostile to social movements aimed at improving society. As indicated by their traditional support for reform causes, Indiana residents have often supported grassroots efforts to change society. Although national strategists did not expect Indiana to ratify, ERA supporters organized early and energetically to work for ratification. Many supporters in Indiana believed that the amendment offered a reevaluation of the role of women in society. Early activists believed that women were plagued by stereotypes and traditional gender definitions that designated women as inferior. In 1975, HERA (Hoosiers for the Equal Rights Amendment) commissioned a survey of state voters in districts 15-16 and 29-36. Their results showed that between 65 and 70 percent of respondents favored ratification of the amendment.⁴⁴ Supporters explained their position by citing the overarching goals of the feminist movement, such as equal pay, equal status within marriage, and equal access to education and career opportunities. At a public hearing at the Statehouse in 1973, the president of St. Mary of the Woods College in Terre Haute argued that the ERA would give women an increased sense of identity, while other women believed that the ERA would eliminate inequalities in the law.⁴⁵ A leading ERA activist reiterated this stance by claiming, “A few years from now we’ll be asking, ‘What was all that fuss about?’ When the emotions are stripped away, it comes down to a matter of justice.”⁴⁶ Hoosier women understood the conservative aspects of their state

⁴⁴ Summary of Survey of Indiana Senate Districts 15-16”, “Summary of Survey of Indiana Senate Districts 29-36,” Audra Bailey Manuscript Collection, M0587, Box 1, Folder 12, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

⁴⁵ “Rival ERA Camps Turn Out for Hearing Before Senate Vote,” *Indianapolis Star*, 9 March 1973, sec. 1 p. 4.

⁴⁶ Judith Head, HERA President, letter to club members, November 1972, Hoosiers for the Equal Rights Amendment Manuscript Collection, M0636, Box 1, Folder 11, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

politics, but infused their efforts with an optimism that Indiana would do the right thing and ratify the ERA.

These women met opposition early on in the ERA's campaign. At the 1973 Statehouse hearing, opponents, led by State Senator Joan Gubbins (R-Indianapolis), focused on specific negative ramifications of the amendment and a wide range of possible consequences for women and society as a whole. The women's movement's claim to speak for all women angered many who resented implications that the life of a housewife was somehow incomplete. Other opponents expressed discomfort with changes to traditional gender roles in society if total equality was applied to all aspects of American life. Many Hoosiers feared that equality would be applied to the military, and that drafting women would reduce military effectiveness and cost men's lives. State Senator Phillip Hayes (D-Evansville) declared that the ERA threatened states' rights by giving Congress and the federal courts the power to enforce the legislation at the federal level. Evelyn Pitschke, an Indianapolis attorney who served as legal advisor to the National STOP ERA organization, believed that the amendment would create a federalized government. Charles Rice from the University of Notre Dame Law School opposed the ERA because he feared it would allow homosexuals to marry.⁴⁷ The majority of anti-ERA speakers focused on either the states' rights' issue or they criticized the denigration of women's roles as wives and mothers. The focus on these two aspects of the debate gave Indiana's rhetoric a conservative focus and located Indiana's anti-ERA activists squarely in the state's past political tendencies.

Several grassroots organizations formed to lobby both for and against the ERA in Indiana. The most cohesive organization at the grassroots level, Hoosiers for the Equal

⁴⁷ "Rival ERA Camps," sec. 1 p. 4.

Rights Amendment (HERA), became one of the most active organizations for the ERA in the state. Formed in response to the 1973 General Assembly's failure to ratify the ERA, HERA was a nonpartisan statewide coalition of over thirty organizations that supported the amendment. It informed the public of the benefits of the ERA, lobbied legislators and appropriate state leaders, and taught supporters to use their votes to effect change. HERA operated on donations and annual membership fees and coordinated activities with the major women's organizations in Indiana, including the League of Women Voters (LWV), the Indiana Chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW), ERA Indiana, and the Indiana branch of the Religious Committee for ERA. The organization's main committee, the Policy Council, planned all activities and designated subcommittees to address strategy, funding, organization, by-laws, political action, and the creation of a speaker's bureau.⁴⁸ HERA encouraged ratification of the ERA through letter writing campaigns, interacting with state legislators, and holding rallies and events. HERA disbanded prior to ratification, but activists have praised the organization and its efforts during the early years of the campaign. Many of its members continued to play key roles as organizers, lobbyists, and campaigners in the ratification process through other ERA organizations in Indiana, and remained active in feminist activities into the future.⁴⁹

Opponents of the amendment did not organize as quickly or as well. Indiana had an active chapter of STOP ERA that relied heavily on information from national coordinator and Illinois resident Phyllis Schlafly. In 1972 Schlafly founded STOP ERA, and later, the Eagle Forum, as conservative women's organizations that worked for

⁴⁸ "ERA Activists Revamp Plans," *Indianapolis Star*, 25 June 1973, sec. 1 p. 10.

⁴⁹ Collection Guide, HERA Manuscript Collection, M0636, Box 1, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

everything from children's education to the elimination of federal funding for the arts.⁵⁰ Schlafly, probably the most identifiable anti-ERA activist in the country, provided local chapters throughout the nation with arguments, ideas, and moral support. Indiana's STOP ERA group worked together with members of the John Birch Society, the Indiana Farm Bureau, clergy members, and interested individuals to oppose the ERA in Indiana.⁵¹ These groups used similar strategies as the HERA women, including vigorous letter writing campaigns and a lobbying effort directed at conservative representatives, to prevent the ERA's ratification.

This cast of actors came together over the course of three legislative sessions in the Indiana General Assembly. The Indiana General Assembly first voted on ERA ratification in the 1973 session when it died in the Senate by a vote of 34 to 16.⁵² Following this failure, ERA supporters hosted a daylong workshop to change their strategy and plan for the following legislative session. About sixty men and women attended the workshop, which received a surprise visit from United States Senator Birch Bayh, who was also one of the authors of the amendment in Congress.⁵³ Bayh was often involved in heated arguments at the federal level with conservative senators from southern states, including Phyllis Schlafly's friend and North Carolina Senator, Sam Ervin.⁵⁴ Bayh determined three causes for the outcome of the Indiana vote: misconceptions about the ERA, male chauvinism, and the fact that a large percentage of women did not support the amendment. Supporters realized that they needed to reach out

⁵⁰ Marshall, 326-329.

⁵¹ Religious Committee for ERA information sheet, Jane Fribley Manuscript Collection, 1975-1987, M0546, Box 1, Folder 3, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

⁵² "Equal Rights Is Dead Issue in Legislature," *Indianapolis Star*, 3 April 1973, sec. 1 p. 1.

⁵³ Seward, 98.

⁵⁴ Mathews and Sherron De Hart, 35-40.

to the large population of rural women who did not belong to any feminist organization and were likely not aware of the issue at all. The group decided to mount a grassroots door-to-door campaign to “make everyone care about the need for ERA.”⁵⁵

In the 1975 legislative session, the House approved the amendment, but the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee rejected it the following day. The Committee decision prevented the full Senate from voting on the bill, which caused protest and opposition from both legislators and activists.⁵⁶ Within a month the same committee passed a *state* equal rights amendment that included a controversial clause excluding any privileges, rights or benefits conferred upon women under the law.⁵⁷ In Indiana, as elsewhere, this kind of protective legislation provision killed support for the amendment and caused its defeat.

The day after the defeat of the ERA by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, thirty protesters with signs and banners marched through the Statehouse during the noon hour. Protesters waved signs criticizing Senate President Pro Tempore Phillip Gutman, who opposed the ERA and received blame for assigning the bill to unfavorable committees that doomed the measure to failure. One sign read “Happy Valentines Day Hoosier Women” and was decorated with black hearts, while another placard read “Godfather Gutman put a contract out on ERA.” The protest march was one of the more radical activities undertaken by ERA supporters in Indiana.⁵⁸ However, when compared to the signs and slogans used by activists in other contested states, the slogans that appeared at Indiana rallies are relatively restrained. Feminist activists in the state

⁵⁵ “ERA Advocates Revamp Plans,” sec. 1 p. 10.

⁵⁶ Seward, 105-107.

⁵⁷ “18 Speakers Urge Ratification of ERA,” *Indianapolis Star*, 27 February 1975, sec. 1 p. 11.

⁵⁸ “ERA Pickets Blame Gutman for Defeat,” *Indianapolis Star*, 15 February 1975, sec. 1 p. 6.

appeared to understand the midwestern roots of Indiana culture, and modified their speech to appeal to a more conservative, although hopefully supportive, audience.⁵⁹

The proposal did not come up for a vote again until the 1977 General Assembly. In the period between the 1975 legislative session and the 1976 elections, Indiana supporters coordinated a flutter of activities. Activist organizations established contacts in key voting districts such as New Albany, Evansville, Fort Wayne, South Bend, and Vincennes.⁶⁰ They worked diligently to elect supportive candidates to state offices during the 1976 election, and for the first time in ten years the Democrats, who were generally considered more supportive of the amendment, won control of the Senate.⁶¹

The ERA quickly appeared at the forefront of the 1977 legislative session. On January 4, 1977, more than 1,200 people attended a joint hearing of the House and Senate to debate the ERA. Each side had one hour to present its arguments and the opposing sides each sent fourteen speakers to the podium. Both sides selected speakers who represented a variety of viewpoints and addressed the many issues surrounding the ERA debate. The pro-ERA side carefully selected speakers to address some of the concerns of the opposition. Supporters selected Virginia Dill McCarty, an ERA lobbyist who would later run for Governor, to represent supporters in a nonconfrontational manner. McCarty was a well-respected woman known for her rational demeanor. A Catholic nun, Sister Maxine Tipen, supported the amendment and did not believe it would result in more abortions, which she opposed. By this point in the campaign, the momentum appeared to swing towards the ratification side of the debate. State Senator Thomas J. Teague (D-

⁵⁹ Seward, 108.

⁶⁰ Meeting minutes, 27 December 1976, ERA Indiana, Jane Fribley Manuscript Collection, 1975-1987, M0546, Box 1, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

⁶¹ Seward, 113.

Anderson), a sponsor of the Senate measure, told the crowd that Indiana and Illinois were the only states north of the Mason-Dixon line that had not yet ratified, and appealed to the progressive and reform values among members of the audience.⁶²

In contrast, opponents continued to warn of the many dangers associated with the ERA. Kathy Nikou, a self-proclaimed “liberated woman,” warned that passage of the ERA would lead the nation into a morass of socialism and decay. John Becker, a Fort Wayne football coach and spokesman for Coaches Against ERA, warned that the amendment would destroy the nation’s athletic programs by prohibiting single-sex teams. However, even Senator Gubbins, the state’s most ardent opponent, conceded that most of the legislators “appeared to favor the other side,” although she insisted that she would not give up the battle. The *Indianapolis Star* summarized the positions as “ERA supporters generally contended that the amendment would remove legal barriers against women, while the opposition warned that passage would create more problems than it would solve.”⁶³

The following day, national activist Phyllis Schlafly personally helped deliver a package of letters in opposition to the amendment to legislative leaders in the Statehouse rotunda.⁶⁴ Supporters held daily noon-time vigils there, organized a rally attended by almost 1,000 people, and hosted a legislative luncheon that featured guest speakers Maureen Reagan and President Jimmy Carter’s daughter-in-law Judy.⁶⁵ These kinds of

⁶² “1200 Jam Hearing as ERA Arguments Presented Final Time,” *Indianapolis Star*, 5 January 1977, sec. 1, p. 1.

⁶³ “1,200 Jam Hearing as ERA Arguments Presented Final Time,” sec. 1 p. 1.

⁶⁴ “ERA Foes Give Unstamped Notes to General Assembly Leaders,” *Indianapolis Star*, 6 January 1977, sec. 1 p. 24.

⁶⁵ “Carter In-Law, Reagan Daughter Boost ERA,” *Indianapolis Star*, 14 January 1977, sec. 1 p. 1.

high profile events helped ERA activities dominate Indianapolis headlines during the month of January and garnered media attention from newspapers across the state.⁶⁶

The 1977 session of the Indiana General Assembly began under conditions of extreme tension. The House voted 54 to 45 in favor of ratification, in front of a standing-room-only crowd that overflowed the House gallery.⁶⁷ In the Senate six days later, with several legislators unable to leave their farms because of extreme weather conditions, the opponents realized that they comprised a majority of senators in the Statehouse and quickly called a vote. Alerted to this plan, supporters delayed the vote until policemen could track down and return the missing senators, which took several days.⁶⁸

On January 18, the Senate spent two hours in heated debate. First Lady Rosalyn Carter called wavering senator W. Wayne Townsend (D-Hartford City), to urge his vote for the measure. The office of U.S. Senator Bayh arranged the phone call. Townsend had been undecided on the pivotal vote, but his support secured the last needed vote for the minimal margin. On January 18, 1977, Indiana became the thirty-fifth, and the last, state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, with a vote of 26-24.⁶⁹

While supporters across the nation rejoiced at the outcome, the amendment still needed three more states to ratify in order to become federal law. Support for ERA ratification declined further after a controversial vote by Congress to extend the ERA ratification deadline from March 1979 to June 1982. Many people, regardless of their opinion on the amendment itself, felt that a deadline extension was unfair. The extension

⁶⁶ Seward, 118.

⁶⁷ "House Approves ERA; Quick Senate Action Seen," *Indianapolis Star*, 13 January 1977, sec. 1 p. 1.

⁶⁸ "Test of ERA Shows Senate May Pass It," *Indianapolis Star*, 15 January 1977, sec. 1 p. 16.

⁶⁹ "ERA Ok'd After Call By Carter," *Indianapolis Star*, 19 January 1977, sec. 1 p. 1; "Proponents Jubilant as ERA Squeaks Through," *Indianapolis Star*, 19 January 1977, sec. 1 p. 22.

met with disapproval across the nation, and in Indiana ERA opponents mounted a campaign to rescind the ratification vote. In February 1979, the Indiana Senate voted to rescind Indiana's ratification of the ERA. When the bill went to the House, however, it was withdrawn in the face of certain defeat.⁷⁰ On June 30, 1982, Indiana's status became moot because less than three-fourths of the states had ratified the amendment.

Even before the deadline had passed, scholars and activists tried to understand the reasons for the ERA's failure. According to Senator Bayh, opposition by a significant number of women was key to the amendment's demise. In the Indiana Senate, two of three female members voted against ratification, illustrating the division that existed among women about the pros and cons of the amendment.⁷¹ For many women, the ERA was a referendum on the rhetoric of the women's liberation movement, which had offended conservative women across the country. A majority of women opposed the drafting of females for military conflict. Many Hoosier housewives resented statements that insulted their choice to be wives and mothers. A primary concern lay in the possibility that the ERA would make housewives responsible for 50 percent of the family income, and would promote the idea of day care for children away from their mothers. This perceived attack on what many women believed was their "right to be a woman" mobilized women across the country against the ERA. In Indiana, the conservative political leanings of state government combined with the traditional gender notions held by the women who mobilized to oppose the amendment to create an atmosphere of tension surrounding the ERA ratification debate.

⁷⁰ "House Sponsors, Facing Defeat, Withdraw Anti-ERA Resolution," *Indianapolis Star*, 28 February 1979, sec. 1 p. 6.

⁷¹ Seward, 99.

Indiana's history of political and social conservatism seemed destined to prevent state ratification of the ERA. While many states quickly ratified the amendment in the early years after federal passage, Indiana had not. Although supportive organizations formed quickly to work for passage, the conservative Indiana General Assembly was not initially in favor of the ERA. A coalition of opposition groups formed to prevent the amendment from state ratification, however, the mounting campaign led by the proponents prevailed during the 1976 elections and again in 1977 when Indiana voted yes to ERA. Indiana's political history and environment, while conservative in reputation and party affiliation, in fact, lent itself to the possibility that the state would accept equal rights for women. The work of the grassroots organizations is what made that possibility a reality.

CHAPTER 3

WORKING TOGETHER?: INDIANA WOMEN ORGANIZING IN SUPPORT OF THE ERA

Indiana ratified the ERA in 1977 due in large part to the many grassroots women's organizations that worked on its behalf, including well-established women's groups as well as groups formed specifically for ERA activity. The white women who became active on behalf of the ERA joined organizations available to them through their previously existing social, political, and professional networks. Women learned of ERA opportunities through groups in which they already participated or through the encouragement of a friend. For this reason, participation in such groups did not often expose women to those who did not share their same life experiences. However, such participation did teach them about political activity. For many, the process of becoming politically active taught them about organizing, compromising, and how to clarify and communicate their own political beliefs. The groups that decided to participate in ERA activity had to determine their core mission, their organizational structure, and their tactics, and they had to learn the political process in fending off challenges from the anti-ERA organizations and the male-dominated Indiana legislature. Although many of the women in leadership positions of these grassroots groups had political experience, the high profile issue also politicized many women who did not have any experience with such activity. Over the course of the five years it took to Indiana to ratify the amendment, these groups often disagreed over tactics and procedures and faced challenges from state legislators and ERA opponents. In spite of the challenges, they successfully organized to persuade the Indiana General Assembly to ratify the amendment.

THE POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF WOMEN

In 1975, feminist scholar and author Jo Freeman wrote a pivotal book on the nature of women's political organizations, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process*. By examining the many women's liberation groups that formed during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Freeman argued that there was a close relationship between social movements (the women's movement) and public policy (political action). She placed the mobilization of women's liberation groups within the larger context of social movement theory. Social movement theory argues there are three conditions necessary to prompt a social movement: 1) there must be a preexisting network of communications, 2) the network must be able to adapt to the needs of a growing social movement, and 3) there must also be a situation of strain.⁷² The organizations of the 1970s wave of feminism grew out of women's groups that already existed, though they may not have considered themselves feminist organizations per se. As the political goals of the women's movement materialized, these women's groups began to come together for the purposes of social action. Several "situations of strain" appeared during the early 1970s around which these women could mobilize, including the refusal of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce the sex provision of Title VII, responses to the Roe

⁷² Jo Freeman's work is actually only a small part of a much larger field of inquiry. Of particular note is the work of social scientist Doug McAdam, who has proposed his own "political process" model of social movement theory, which argues that protest activity is "the result of a combination of expanding political opportunities." He does not believe that there is a direct correlation between a situation of strain and a social protest movement because whereas a situation of strain is always present for some group in society, a social protest movement is a rare occurrence. For more information, see his *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 1-45.

v. Wade decision, and the growing conflict over the ERA within the federal government.⁷³

Although the women's movement manifested itself into countless organizations, groups, and political styles, Freeman argued it can be divided into two overarching camps, representing two different aspects of women's society. The two branches employed different styles, orientations, values, and forms of organizations when it came to overt political activity.⁷⁴ Freeman describes an older branch exemplified by organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC). Made up primarily of white, middle-age, middle-class, working women, these groups tended to focus on legal and economic problems. This group of women is known as the "women's rights" movement in that they focused on granting women equal rights under the law without advocating radical changes to society. Their organizations used a top-down organizational style with elected officers, by-laws, and a focus on democratic structure and procedure. They started at the national level and trickled down to form local chapters.⁷⁵ The younger branch of the women's movement consisted of numerous small groups engaged in a wide variety of activities and issues, whose contact with each other was much less organized or formal. Like the older branch, the younger groups were made up of predominately white, middle class, college-educated women. This group of women is known as the "women's liberation" movement in that they hoped to revolutionize society and eliminate the patriarchal

⁷³ Freeman, 47-49, 65-69; full case citation is *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), Goldstein, 336.

⁷⁴ Freeman, 47-49.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 49-50.

structure that held women in a position of submission.⁷⁶ Unlike the older groups however, the younger branch consisted of small, local groups with no overarching national organization to tie them together.⁷⁷ The younger groups inherited a loose, participant-oriented attitude from the youth movements of the 1960s. These groups used more experimental tactics in their political activity than their legislative-focused elders.⁷⁸

Both the older and younger branches of the women's movement were represented in Indiana's pro-ERA campaign. A different distinction between groups existed in Indiana, however, particularly between NOW and the other ERA-focused organizations based in Indianapolis. Although for Freeman, NOW represented the women's rights branch of the women's movement, many Hoosiers considered the NOW chapter in Indiana quite radical. NOW supported many controversial issues in addition to the ERA during the 1970s, including day care centers, reproductive freedom, and rights for gays and lesbians. In Indiana, NOW often disagreed with some of the more mainstream women's groups about strategy. NOW believed in more overt activities that garnered media attention as opposed to the more legislature-focused tactics of the League of Women's Voters and other such groups.⁷⁹ Longtime Indiana NOW president Marion Wagner referred to the LWV's political strategies as "tea party tactics" and supported NOW's more proactive, attention-getting activities.⁸⁰ Some of the older activists believed that legislators avoided NOW and the other newer, younger organizations out of fear of association with women's "libbers." It is important to point out that NOW, an

⁷⁶ John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, et al, editors, *Out of Many: A History of the American People*. Vol. 2, 4th Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003: 922-923.

⁷⁷ Freeman, 50-51.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 50-60.

⁷⁹ Marion Wagner, interview by Jeannie Regan, 19 September 1995, p. 3-4, Private collection; Materials in collection, Indiana NOW Records, 1960- , Manuscript Collection, M0583, Box 2, Folder 6,13,14,15; Box 4, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

⁸⁰ Wagner, 3.

organization often considered traditional among the larger feminist movement, represented the radical perspective in Indiana. This “radical” perspective included the feminist arguments against such “American institutions” as marriage, the traditional nuclear family, and the Miss America pageant. Articles in many popular publications described how feminists advocated socialism as a prerequisite for achieving equality for women.⁸¹ Although for Hoosier voters the feminist perspectives held by NOW members were quite radical, when compared with the lesbian communes and the groups advocating the elimination of the male sex and wages for housewives based on their husband’s salary coming from groups elsewhere in the nation, these basic critiques of American gender roles were actually the more mainstream feminist platforms.⁸²

NOW was one of the high profile organizations affiliated with the ERA in Indiana. NOW began at the national level in 1966 as an effort to combat discrimination against and to promote equality for women. It promoted anti-discrimination legislation, child-care centers, and reproductive freedom. The Indiana chapter of NOW formed in 1972 to fight for the same issues at the state level.⁸³ In conservative Indiana, many Hoosiers associated such issues with the “women’s lib” movement they saw on television and feared the “radical” feminists and their activities. Local NOW chapters tended to be affiliated with universities in Bloomington, Muncie, and Fort Wayne, and were thus somewhat separate from the women’s groups focused on lobbying the legislature in Indianapolis. The lack of truly radical organizations in the state meant that NOW attracted members in Indiana that likely would have joined more radical groups in other

⁸¹ Seward, 99-101.

⁸² Freeman, 40-50.

⁸³ Collection Guide, Indiana NOW Records, 1960- Manuscript Collection, M0583, Box 1, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

states. In addition to their support of the ERA, Indiana NOW chapters supported abortion rights, a contentious stance that often put them at odds with the state's more conservative legislators. This association with abortion rights and the radical aspects of 1960s' activism created a rift between NOW and some of the less radical women's groups in the state.

The Indianapolis-based organizations that were active in the ERA campaign tended to represent an older generation of women more established in their professional careers. These organizations included the League of Women Voters (LWV), the Indiana Women's Political Caucus (IWPC), and the coalition organization Hoosiers for the Equal Rights Amendment (HERA). Groups like LWV and IWPC had long worked to bring women into the political arena, either as candidates or as voters. These groups tended to focus on women's need for economic independence at the expense of some of the social demands made by the more radical groups. They did not lobby for the ERA as a sweeping reform measure that altered gender roles in society. They believed instead that an ERA was necessary to ensure women equal access to jobs, opportunities, and sustainable salaries.

The LWV formed in 1920 from the rosters of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Following this national shift from suffrage to women's political advocacy, the LWV of Indiana also formed in 1920 from the roster of the Women's Franchise League of Indiana. The League focused on protecting the rights of voters, women, and children through education and support.⁸⁴ The League maintained a traditional organizational structure with elected officers, committees, and by-laws.

⁸⁴ Collection Guide, League of Women Voters of Indiana Manuscript Collection, M0612, Box 1, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

According to long-time president Barbara Zimmer, women joined the LWV during the 1960s out of a desire to be more active in their communities. The LWV during this time supported fair housing legislation and actively worked for civil rights in Indianapolis. The group also became active in environmental issues, and lobbied for air and water quality legislation in the state. Although the League traditionally took progressive positions on these issues, the LWV did not support the ERA until the 1970s. At that point they began to get involved in the campaign for ratification, but continued to distance themselves from the younger groups they associated with the women's liberation movement. The LWV participated in the ERA campaign by holding public information meetings and creating discussion guides to help inform women of the issue. They did not believe in the attention-getting tactics used by NOW and other younger groups. According to Zimmer, "we just knew they would be ineffective in a state as conservative as Indiana."⁸⁵

Another key organization for the ERA campaign was the (Greater) Indiana Women's Political Caucus (IWPC). Activist Virginia Dill McCarty started the Indiana chapter in 1971, after reading about the National Women's Political Caucus summer meeting in Philadelphia. McCarty felt that being involved with NOW was "death for a politician." She wanted an organization that worked to increase women's political involvement that would be separate from NOW in Indiana. She started the group by calling her friends and organizing meetings. The organization followed parliamentary procedures, which discouraged many political novices from participating. They created a state constitution and by-laws. Although the IWPC did get involved in the ERA campaign, it focused on the "bread and butter issues" of encouraging women to vote and

⁸⁵ Barbara Zimmer, interview by Jeannie Regan, 30 November 1993, p. 3-8, Private Collection.

run for office.⁸⁶ The IWPC is a good example of the mainstream women's organizations in Indiana that worked on the ERA campaign.

In addition to the already existing women's political groups, coalition groups formed to focus on ERA activity in the state. Since many of the predominant organizations involved in the ERA ratification effort were involved in a wide variety of other issues as well, supporters saw a need to pool the efforts of the many groups into a group that could focus solely on ERA activity. Hoosiers for the Equal Rights Amendment (HERA) formed in response to the Indiana General Assembly's failure to ratify the ERA in 1972. According to McCarty, HERA formed as an alliance between NOW, LWV, and the IWPC, although its roster includes a lengthy list of additional organizations.⁸⁷ Women in Indiana wanted to work for ERA ratification, but the various groups had additional and sometimes oppositional priorities (reproductive freedom versus women's increased representation in the political process, for instance) on their platforms that they did not want to abandon. Other active coalition groups included ERA Indiana, the Greater Indianapolis ERA Coalition, and the Marion County ERA Coalition. By creating coalitions, these groups were able to combine their resources without having to compromise on their other priorities. The coalitions themselves were more single-issue oriented than the individual member organizations because of their need to separate the non-ERA platforms from their ERA work.

As elsewhere in the nation, women from the different types of women's organizations had different ideas on the best tactics to use for ERA ratification.

⁸⁶ Virginia Dill McCarty, interview by Jeannie Regan, 3 November 1993, p. 12-19, Private Collection.

⁸⁷ In addition to those mentioned above, organizations included the United Steel Workers, the YWCA, the Indiana State Teachers Association, etc. "HERA Organizations," HERA Manuscript Collection, M0636, Box 1, Folder 3, Indiana History Society, Indianapolis; McCarty, 22.

According to IWPC President McCarty, she was recruited by Senator Birch Bayh to help keep the feminists in Indiana from “going too far” and destroying the Indiana ratification effort. McCarty criticized the more radical tactics that called for burning anti-ERA legislators in effigy and other dramatic gestures that hurt the image of feminists in public opinion.⁸⁸ Beth Van Vorst, a prominent ERA activist, felt that NOW was “radical” and that such groups did not have a solid platform that resonated with Indiana voters and politicians.⁸⁹ In contrast, the women of NOW believed that the more conservative organizations were against them because of their ties to national organizations. The younger activists believed that the mainstream groups were much more conservative and were too focused on middle-class issues. They felt that their contributions were not acknowledged by the organizations based in Indianapolis.⁹⁰

The younger, more radical women centered in college towns were active in Indiana and certainly contributed to raising awareness of the ERA throughout the state. However, their older and more conservative counterparts in Indianapolis were influential as well, and ultimately had a more direct impact on the state legislature’s ratification of the amendment. They organized to focus specifically on the ERA, targeted the legislative process as a strategy, and in the process, introduced a new set of women to political activity.

WHY WOMEN PARTICIPATED

Scholars have been looking for the motivating factors for politically active women for quite some time. In 1977, political scientists Kent Tedin, David Brady, and

⁸⁸ McCarty, 15-22.

⁸⁹ Beth Van Vorst, interview by Eloise Scroggins, 23 April 2002, p. 1, Private Collection.

⁹⁰ Wagner, 3-4.

Arnold Vedlitz argued that historically women are less politically active than men because of sex-role socialization and the situations of adulthood. They argued that although sex-role (or gendered) socialization influences the roles a woman feels comfortable taking later in her life, the situations of her adulthood can override this by creating an environment that stimulates political discussion and activity. As more and more women found themselves in situations that encouraged political activity, increased numbers of women would join political organizations.⁹¹ The encouragement and support women received through the activities in which they participated helped them gain the confidence to become politically active during the ERA campaign.

Many scholars study women and their political involvement, looking for characteristics that provide insight into what motivates women to action. In 1983, sociologists Arland Thornton, Duane Alwin, and Donald Camburn published the results of their eighteen-year panel study of women and their children regarding sex-role socialization and attitude change over time. They found a series of factors that contributed to a woman's support of the feminist movement and her ability to accept new ideas and arguments. A woman's education and work experience (especially continuing to work after marriage) were strong factors in a woman's support of women's rights. Parental beliefs did not have a strong correlation to the political opinions of their daughters, although such beliefs are important to the degree that they affect sex-role socialization. They did not find a strong correlation between religious beliefs and support of women's causes, although they did find that church attendance (as different from

⁹¹ Kent Tedin, David Brady, and Arnold Vedlitz, "Sex Differences in Political Attitudes and Behavior: The Case for Situational Factors," *The Journal of Politics* 39, no. 2 (May 1977): 448-456.

religious beliefs) had a strong negative effect on support for women's issues.⁹² These statistics show that women who are college-educated and employed after marriage are the most likely to become involved in political activity. These characteristics support the general trends seen in Indiana's pro-ERA organizations, particularly in the older groups working in Indianapolis.

Freeman had her own theory about what motivates women to political action. She argued that the "situation of strain" referred to by social movement theory existed for women in the form of what she calls "relative deprivation."⁹³ As defined by political scientist Ted Robert Gurr, relative deprivation is "a perceived discrepancy between value expectation and value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightly entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining given the social means available to them."⁹⁴ In other words, relative deprivation refers to the contrast between what people expect to get out of life versus what they believe themselves capable to attain. This theory describes the plight of women who, armed with college educations, experience, and a desire to participate in society on equal footing with men, felt frustrated when they could not, and grew more so when they learned that gender was the only reason why. The theory of relative deprivation also explains why both waves of the women's movement have been led largely by white, middle-class women.⁹⁵ The women

⁹² Arland Thornton, Duane F. Alwin, and Donald Camburn, "Causes and Consequences of Sex-Role Attitudes and Attitude Change," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (April 1983): 221-227.

⁹³ Freeman, 13-16.

⁹⁴ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970: 13.

⁹⁵ Social scientist Doug McAdam discusses the theory of relative deprivation in his work, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930 – 1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. He disagrees that relative deprivation can adequately describe the women's movement as a social protest movement because it focuses too much on the emotions of the individual participants. The theory is useful when discussing why individual women joined organizations in the first place however, which is

who joined the movement often had college educations and worked in professional jobs, which both increased their professional expectations and exposed them to the realities of gender inequality on a daily basis.⁹⁶

The demographics of the women who participated in the organizations is important because the structure of the political organizations themselves was actually determined by the political training of the women who joined. The women who made up the older branch of participants were trained in and had used some form of traditional political action. McCarty's family had a long history of involvement in the Indiana Democratic Party, and she had made connections while in law school to several professional and legal organizations. McCarty graduated from Indiana University Law School, and became angry when she could not get a job after graduation regardless of her impressive resume. She worked for the state Attorney General and garnered extensive political experience, which served her well as she took leadership positions in various women's political organizations.⁹⁷ She was involved in the IWPC at its beginning in 1971, and took leadership positions in many of the ERA organizations for the next six years.⁹⁸ Her experience and training also shaped her belief that the best approach for ERA ratification would be through traditional political channels and strategies.

While many of the women who took leadership roles in the ERA organizations had prior political experience, not all did. Another prominent women's activist, Frances Rhome, went to an IWPC meeting out of friendship to someone she knew through her

why I cite it here. Sara Evans also discusses this motivation in Chapter 7 of *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1979.

⁹⁶ Freeman, 14-17.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 1-8.

⁹⁸ McCarty, 12.

duties as the head librarian at the Indiana University/Purdue University in Indianapolis law library. Although she had participated in such college organizations as the American Association for University Women, she did not become overtly involved in the women's movement until she attended this meeting.⁹⁹

The women's movement in Indiana was successful because it brought many women who had not previously been active in local politics together to work for the ERA. The existence of a network of women's groups with established political participants helped the ERA groups organize and create viable structures. It was helpful to have leaders who knew what they were doing to establish organizations where curious women could go to get involved. Often times these leaders had to teach and train the women joining for the first time. According to IWPC member Frances Dodson Rhome, "Some of our women that started at that time were really rather naïve about what they had to do. But they were intelligent and quick learners." The presence of political novices, however, brought a fresh perspective and energetic activists to the campaign, and ensured that the ERA received the attention it deserved.¹⁰⁰

The fact that female politicians, businesswomen, teachers, students, and many others all came together is a testament to the power of the ERA as a unifying issue for women's groups.¹⁰¹ According to Freeman, in order for a social movement to be effective, there must be an established chain of networks to facilitate communication. The network has to link a group of like-minded people likely to be predisposed to the new

⁹⁹ Frances Dodson Rhome, interview by Jeannie Regan, 16 November 1993, p. 2-6, Private Collection.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 7-10. LWV member Barbara Zimmer also discussed the benefit of having energetic volunteers, p. 17-18.

¹⁰¹ For more information on the various professional and social groups that supported the ERA in Indiana, see the HERA membership list, HERA Manuscript Collection, M0636, Box 1, Folder 3, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

ideas and goals of the growing movement. Freeman uses the example of the 180,000-member Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, long a stalwart of the women's social community, that did not assume a leadership role in the women's movement of the 1970s because of the diverse beliefs of its membership.¹⁰² Political science professor Susan J. Carroll has argued that women need a "network of commonality" to act as a socially constructed group that can be motivated for political action. She argued that women could not have affected political change without a strong core of political networks. These networks serve more important functions than just mobilizing letter-writers and voters. They give women the power to become active in politics on an individual level and encourage them to have confidence in their political beliefs and activities. According to Carroll, "Women in male-dominated institutions are likely to be able to resist such pressures only if they have alternative arenas in which their identities as women can be validated."¹⁰³ This existing structure of networks is key to not only connecting like-minded women, but also to giving women the confidence necessary for them to raise their voices for political action.

In addition to the many personal benefits associated with participation in women's groups, many women used the skills developed in these ERA organizations in future political activities as well. Sociology professor Joan Acker argues that although agency ultimately resides in people rather than the organizations themselves, the act of organizing politically is a social activity. In addition to teaching women about the political issues affecting their gender and the ways in which they can influence legislative

¹⁰² Freeman, 67.

¹⁰³ Susan J. Carroll, "Women State Legislators, Women's Organizations, and the Representation of Women's Culture in the United States," *Women Transforming Politics: Worldwide Strategies for Empowerment*, Jill M. Bystydzienski, editor. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992: 39.

outcomes, women also had to learn basic skills of compromise and organization. The early organizers had to compromise on the extent of true democracy wanted in the organizations, and argued over the need to follow established organizational procedures or eliminate all hierarchical systems. This conflict ultimately resulted in several splinter groups nationally, but through this process many women learned to clarify their political beliefs and vocalize their opinions.¹⁰⁴

Because women in Indiana tended to organize along already established networks of friends, neighbors, and co-workers, ERA-organization memberships saw the same race and class differences that existed in friendship networks during the 1970s.¹⁰⁵ McCarty explained at the national meeting of the Women's Political Caucus in 1971 that she wanted to include "welfare mothers," but she felt that many poorer women would not have the time to participate. She also felt that in order to lobby and campaign the organization would need money, and that by "setting the dues to the lowest common denominator" the groups would never meet their goals.¹⁰⁶ Many women from poorer families did not have the luxury of doing volunteer work, and often felt out of place in groups of women that had known each other for years and had similar life experiences. Many group leaders assumed that minority women did not have the time, resources or interest to participate, which justified their small efforts to actively encourage such women to join their cause. The existence of this cycle supported the notion that women organized along existing social networks rather than join unfamiliar groups outside of

¹⁰⁴ Joan Acker, "Feminist Goals and Organizing Process," *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, editors. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995: 137-144.

¹⁰⁵ Acker, 142.

¹⁰⁶ McCarty, 16.

their comfortable sphere of activity. In Indianapolis, the various groups of women were unable to overcome these traditional networking patterns to work together.

WHAT THEY DID TO PARTICIPATE

Many of the individual women's organizations in Indiana focused on other issues in addition to the ERA. Indiana's chapter of the IWPC also worked diligently to put more women in public office. Members worked to abolish Indiana's discriminatory inheritance tax policies, and to ensure that if a woman put her husband through college that she would receive a portion of his income if they should divorce.¹⁰⁷ Many women's organizations agreed on the need to "raise the consciousness" of Hoosier women to teach them about the issues that affected women as a group and the avenues available to them for action. Many of the women who joined Indiana's women's groups during the 1970s went on to participate in these other issues related to the women's movement in addition to their ERA work.

In addition to these issues upon which most women's organizations could agree however, were the few issues that drove them apart. The abortion-rights debate and the complicated relationship between the women's movement and the lesbian community were problematic issues for the more mainstream women's organizations. Many women joined the women's movement to support abortion rights, and according to activist Frances Rhome, in order to join the IWPC, one had to be pro-choice.¹⁰⁸ However, many of the older, more traditional leaders of the Indiana groups were anti-abortion and did not

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 38.

¹⁰⁸ Rhome, 4; Muncie NOW Members, interview by Jeannie Regan, 1 November 1993, p. 2, Private Collection.

want it on their platform.¹⁰⁹ Support for lesbians was problematic as well, although not so much in Indiana as elsewhere in the nation because of the small number of homosexual groups in the state. The more traditional leaders felt that ties to the lesbian community tainted the whole women's movement with a "radical" label, while many of the college campus activists criticized the traditional groups for ignoring the plight of their lesbian sisters.¹¹⁰

If women argued over the issues adopted by the individual women's organizations, the discussion over appropriate and effective tactics was even more divisive. Many of the ERA organizations adopted tactics used by groups across the country, including lobbying state legislators, electing pro-ERA candidates, teaching women how to get involved, and organizing letter-writing campaigns and telephone trees. The IWPC distributed guidelines for how to organize a local caucus, and encouraged organizers to coordinate door-to-door canvas drives, register new voters, involve new people, and embrace the press.¹¹¹ The LWV participated in the ERA campaign by holding public information meetings and creating discussion guides to help inform women of the issue.¹¹² NOW organizations in both Bloomington and Muncie encouraged other activities as well, including the filing of anti-discrimination lawsuits, "consciousness-raising" with police to force them to pay closer attention to crimes against women, dramatic public displays designed to get press attention (such as burning anti-ERA legislators in effigy), and the staging of rallies.¹¹³ The more traditional ERA

¹⁰⁹ McCarty, 40.

¹¹⁰ Wagner, 4.

¹¹¹ Indiana Women's Political Caucus Newsletter, 8/1/72, Vol 1, No 2, Private Collection, Beth Van Vorst.

¹¹² Zimmer, 3-8.

¹¹³ Wagner, 4-5; Muncie NOW, 7-8.

activists criticized those activities that supported the women's movement's reputation as radical, and were therefore opposed to any tactic that was not seen as appropriate political activity.

After learning the ideologies associated with the various women's organizations, many new activists had to learn about the tactics and strategies involved in political activism. NOW employed some of the newer tactics used by the 1960s activists groups, including consciousness-raising and ZAP Action, a social protest term used by NOW members to describe action that takes place right away.¹¹⁴ Consciousness-raising took place in "rap groups", where new and old members discussed their life situations. These discussions helped women put their personal problems into political perspective. Many organizations used these rap sessions as training for women new to feminist activity.¹¹⁵ In Indiana, this process of joining groups combined with the feminist training they then received, led to more overt political involvement on the part of Indiana women. Women in the various chapters wrote letters to their district representatives, worked on local campaigns, and organized bus trips to Indianapolis to lobby and rally in the state capitol. According to NOW member Sue Errington,

I never felt like I could speak up. One of the first things that I did with NOW was that we had a fundraising party and I ended up on a committee. . . And it was the first time I asked people to do something, and from there I went to asking people to get involved in actions, help fill the busses, ask people for money, to write letters. . . They all built on each other to give me a background I didn't have as a leader.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Muncie NOW Members, 5-8.

¹¹⁵ Freeman, 85-86.

¹¹⁶ Muncie NOW Members, 4.

The women who joined Indiana's women's organizations during the 1970s received a crash course in feminist ideology and activities before jumping into the political sphere.

The women who participated in the various women's organizations did so out of a common interest in women's issues. They made use of existing social networks and available women's organizations to become involved in political activity. Through the course of this political activity many of these women became much more experienced and knowledgeable. IWPC member Frances Dodson Rhome said that participation improved her quality of life and made her much more confident and happy.¹¹⁷ Activist Rosalie Kelly claimed that activism pushed her to learn and grow as a woman.¹¹⁸ And the women who participated in the Muncie chapter of NOW learned organizational skills and how to speak up in front of a group. They also believed that the women's movement gave them a community of friends, and many of their social networks expanded as a result of political involvement.¹¹⁹ For many of the women who participated in ERA activity, the political and social elements of participation were intimately connected.

The women who organized during the 1970s played an essential role in Indiana's 1977 ratification of the ERA. HERA and other coalition groups resulted from the wide variety of groups that supported the ERA and worked on its behalf. Although these smaller groups often disagreed on the different issues associated with the women's movement, and certainly disagreed on the appropriate tactics and methods that worked best, they came together enough to persuade Indiana's legislators that the ERA was good for the state. Their successful organization taught women about political organization and

¹¹⁷ Rhome, 32.

¹¹⁸ Rosalie Kelly, interview by Jeannie Regan, 27 October 1993, p. 14, Private Collection.

¹¹⁹ Muncie NOW Members, 4.

the legislative process, but along the way it also taught them to clarify and voice their own political beliefs and work with a group towards a common goal.

CHAPTER 4

SPEAKING FOR ALL WOMEN ?: BLACK WOMEN IN INDIANA'S ERA CAMPAIGN

Grassroots organizations effected tremendous change in American society during the 1960s and 1970s. In two highly visible social movements, both African Americans and women tried to alter their status in American society. Each group relied on rhetoric that invoked a sense of justice for the people who have traditionally been marginalized in the masculine, white-controlled power structure. They criticized a country that claimed to be founded on egalitarian principles, yet denied true equality to large groups of its citizens. A number of pieces of legislation passed during this time affected gender and race relations, and sparked a national debate on the principle of equality and how literally it could be applied to different groups in society.

Many scholars have understood the grassroots campaign over the ERA as a predominately white movement. This is a problematic interpretation because African American women actually favored the amendment in greater numbers than white women. A 1976 poll of Missouri voters found that 83 percent of blacks favored the ERA as compared with 55 percent of whites.¹²⁰ Following the civil rights activity during the 1960s, it is understandable that blacks would feel a certain connection to a movement focused on fighting for equal rights under the law. African-American women did not, however, take a visible role in the political debate over the ERA. The organizations that actively lobbied both for and against the amendment had almost exclusively white memberships. Historically, black and white women have not worked together on

¹²⁰ Sedgewick and Williams, 26.

women's issues, but instead created separate organizations to focus on their distinct needs. The case of Indiana reveals that black women's support for the ERA remained at the individual rather than organizational level because of the historically separate nature of black and white women's institutional interactions and the distinct needs of each group. During the 1970s, neither group was able to overcome this separation to bring black women into the largely white, middle-class movement that worked for the ERA. Regardless of their low level of participation in the predominately white organizations devoted to ERA ratification, the support of black organizations and black women in Indiana helped create a grassroots coalition of the two pivotal social reform movements of the day.

BLACK WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL REALM

Addressing the weak relationship between black women and the mainstream feminist movement, Jo Freeman argued that black women were not threatened by the same "relative deprivation" that affected white women. Black women still suffered from racial discrimination, and were therefore less likely to view gender as their sole reason for a lack of access to professional opportunities.¹²¹ Most scholars of the ERA since Freeman have tried to address the relationship of the races within the amendment debate as well, with varying levels of depth. In Janet Boles' analysis of the conflict over the ERA, she mentions black women only a few times. Her main discussion of black support of the ERA refers to the potential liability in conservative states of ERA endorsements by black organizations.¹²² Jane Mansbridge only addresses race and the amendment through

¹²¹ Freeman, 40.

¹²² Boles, 91.

comparisons of the ERA to key pieces of Civil Rights legislation. Again, she makes no mention of black women and their role in the debate.¹²³ More recently, Donald Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart discuss the ideological relationship between racial discrimination and the ERA, with particular regard for the opposition's merging of the two subjects, but they did not address the role of black women in North Carolina's ratification story.¹²⁴ Most of these works acknowledge that the ERA movement was a predominately white movement, and refer to race only in the context of how the amendment fit into the Civil Rights movement that preceeded the women's movement. What these historians and social scientists often dismissed as a difference in priorities and life experiences between black and white women, however, did not necessarily translate into a lack of support on the part of African Americans.

National polls and surveys showed high levels of support among both black men and women for the ERA. The 1972 Louis Harris/Virginia Slims poll showed that 62 percent of black women favored "efforts to strengthen or change women's status in society" compared with only 45 percent of white women. Sixty-seven percent of black women expressed "sympathy with efforts of women's liberation groups" compared with only 35 percent of white women.¹²⁵ Dorothy Height summarized black support for the ERA as, "In keeping with the long tradition among Blacks of supporting progressive legislation, especially in the area of human rights."¹²⁶ Given their clear support of women's rights, and their devotion to the cause of equality with regard to the Civil Rights

¹²³ Mansbridge, 48-49, 114, 141.

¹²⁴ Mathews and De Hart, 174.

¹²⁵ Freeman, 38.

¹²⁶ "The Equal Rights Amendment—Impact on Black America," *Black Woman's Voice*, April 1980, Page 8. Publication of the National Council of Negro Women. National Council of Negro Women—Indianapolis Section Manuscript Collection, M0539, Box 1, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Movement, why then did ERA organizations have such low levels of black membership? The answer appears to have less to do with their agreement with feminist ideas than the demographics of the ERA organizations and a fear on the part of black women that membership in the white women's organizations would somehow diminish their ability to focus on issues important to them as members of the black race.

African-American women had to pick their issues and activities very carefully. During the 1960s, black women reacted to the criticism that their own strength and relative equality within the black community was somehow responsible for problems with the black male ego and his inability to provide for his family.¹²⁷ The controversial Moynihan Report, issued in 1965, linked black poverty to female-headed households and high levels of black male unemployment.¹²⁸ Dorothy Height, national president of the National Council of Negro Women, said "If the Negro woman has a major underlying concern, it is the status of the Negro man and his position in the community and his need for feeling himself as an important person, free and able to make his contribution in the whole society in order that he may strengthen his home."¹²⁹ In Indiana, commissions created by both the state legislature and the Indianapolis city government linked the growing percentage of female-headed families to the high rate of poverty within the black community. A member of the commission believed that young black males "fathered children with little or no intent to be fathers," leaving black women to raise the next generation of African Americans.¹³⁰ By acknowledging the fact that black women bore the brunt of the community responsibility, these commissions subtly accused black men

¹²⁷ White, 198-200.

¹²⁸ Giddings, 324-325.

¹²⁹ Freeman, 41.

¹³⁰ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000: 204-205.

of abandoning their children and families. Black women had to argue for their needs as women without further offending black men and criticizing their contribution to black communities.

Because of this problematic situation, black feminists have traditionally had two sources of conflict. Black women have had to fight for status alongside the white women who deny them true racially-equal sisterhood, and they also have to struggle against the black men who deny them gender equality. In 1935, National Council of Negro Women founder Mary McLeod Bethune believed that neither male-dominated black organizations nor white women's groups had encouraged black women to use their own voices to the best of their ability.¹³¹ During the 1950s and 1960s, black men and women joined forces to fight for civil rights, creating a mentality of black versus white. During the 1970s, black women were unable to overcome these differences and unite with white women to fight for gender equality. In addition to this hesitancy on the part of black women, the white women's organizations did not adequately represent the concerns and distinct political situation of their non-white sisters.¹³² Black women's loyalty has always had to balance the priorities of the two camps of activism.

Black feminists began organizing in earnest for themselves when overt black male chauvinism dominated the power structure of many civil rights organizations such as SNCC, SCLC, and the NAACP.¹³³ In 1973 the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) formed to fight for political, social, and economic equality specifically for black

¹³¹ Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987: 93.

¹³² Giddings, 95-98. Giddings argues that the difference between black and white women's clubs can be seen in the people each group focused on helping. White women's clubs were concerned with uplifting other women, whereas black women's clubs focused on the sick and the poor of both genders within the black community.

¹³³ Giddings, 302-303.

women. Within a year, two thousand black women had joined ten chapters of the organization. Black women had made significant gains in the areas of education, employment, and income since the 1950s, yet still found themselves on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. The same relative deprivation that motivated white women to action also affected black women, as unmet expectations became a painful reality for black women. Many black women became frustrated with the slow pace of progress and were motivated to political action.¹³⁴

Black feminist historians are now countering the previously held notion that black women did not participate in the women's movement. A deeper look at black women during the 1960s and 1970s shows that although they did not join the mainstream white feminist organizations, they actually supported feminist causes at higher rates than white women. Historian Bernice McNair Barnett argues that black women were organizing and raising their feminist consciousness during the 1940s and 1950s, the years typically referred to as the "doldrums" for white feminists. This period is when black women joined the many civil rights organizations, allowing them to be active in the political spheres of the black community.¹³⁵

During the 1960s, interest in political activity increased among African Americans in Indianapolis. Record numbers of black voters turned out in the 1963 city elections, causing state and local officials to pay attention to racial issues.¹³⁶ Indianapolis had the largest black population in the state, and blacks experienced racial discrimination in areas of employment, use of public facilities, and in housing. Indianapolis had active chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP),

¹³⁴ Giddings, 344-345.

¹³⁵ Barnett, 199-219.

¹³⁶ Thornbrough, 175-176.

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Urban League, which all worked to improve race relations in the city. Black women participated in these movements as well, including Edna Johnson, a black female who served as the president of the Indianapolis chapter of the NAACP. Black women's political awareness formed in the context of these civil rights organizations, framing their interpretation of the ERA through this particular lens.

WHO PARTICIPATED AND HOW?

Black feminists across the nation have long criticized the 1970s women's movement for ignoring two of its largest potential constituencies: working class women and black women. The National Organization for Women (NOW) did not work to form an effective coalition with black women's groups at both the state and national level, focusing instead on the white, middle-class women called to action by Betty Friedan's pivotal work, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). After confronting the organized opposition to the ERA, NOW made a conscious effort to alter its rhetoric on the amendment to bring more conventional women into the fold, at the expense of its black and working class allies. NOW's continued focus on issues such as abortion and lesbianism alienated many black and hispanic women who had different concerns about the major problems facing women. NOW's focus on female inequality in the face of glaring social and class inequality offended many lower-class women who suffered from extreme poverty and need. Rather than address minority concerns, NOW sponsored separate chapters in minority communities. The expansion of NOW chapters in the face of its continued refusal to address the concerns of minority women added insult to injury. Minority

feminists sponsored a 1979 resolution that blacks should quit NOW or refrain from joining it until the group confronted its own racism.¹³⁷

Many black women referred to the feminist movement of the 1970s as the *white* women's movement. Black women have held various key leadership positions within the feminist movement at large, but they reached them through channels set up by their separate black women's groups. In Indiana, Mag Mallory was the only black woman pictured in the HERA directory, where she was listed as the director of the "race committee."¹³⁸ Prior to 1973, black women's groups dealt largely with problems in the black community, and their presence at interracial conventions and meetings, however few in number, usually focused on the need to support an antiracist agenda. Feminist historians have often understood the racial separation seen during the 1970s as the result of a historically segregated club system for black and white women. Although black women tended to support the ERA, many feared being subsumed by the larger, more mainstream, and white-dominated national feminist organizations.¹³⁹

One of the more active black women's groups during the 1970s in Indiana was the local chapter of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). Like its national organization founded by Mary McCleod Bethune in 1935, the Indianapolis section of NCNW sponsored programs about alcoholism, voter registration, volunteerism, and many other community issues. The group actively participated in events commemorating black history, and hosted a tea to welcome all black women new to the area.¹⁴⁰ The organization maintained several standing committees, including membership, public

¹³⁷ Giddings, 340-344.

¹³⁸ HERA Membership directory, 1975, Beth Van Vorst personal collection.

¹³⁹ Freeman, 37-38.

¹⁴⁰ This organization worked in close conjunction with Darlene Clark Hine on her Black Women in the Middle West Project to collect and preserve the history of black women in Indiana and the Midwest.

relations, welfare, international events, newcomers, and black history.¹⁴¹ These committees all focused on issues related to civil rights and basic community development in black neighborhoods.

Although black women were obviously involved in activism designed to affect social change, they did not play a significant role in the organizations formed to specifically work for ERA ratification in Indiana. White ERA supporters recognized the need to include black women in the campaign, evident in their attempts to address the common criticism of the feminist movement as being geared towards a white, middle-class experience. While planning for an important joint hearing of the Indiana legislature in January 1977, ERA Indiana activists outlined the preferred line up of supportive speakers and the issues they should address. The first speaker was to be a “well-respected housewife known for her moderate and rational demeanor,” the second speaker was to be a female farmer to appeal to the largely rural state population, the third speaker should be a “legal-type” to counter the state’s rights argument, the fourth speaker should address the abortion issue *and* provide a black perspective, and the fifth speaker needed to be a Republican housewife to counter the negative stereotypes surrounding feminists. The fact that the black perspective did not even get its own speaker slot demonstrates a lack of commitment to racial inclusion in favor of displaying economic, geographical, and ideological diversity. Organizers suggested that a black nun, Sister Fransisca Thompson,

¹⁴¹ Materials in collection, National Council of Negro Women—Indianapolis Section Manuscript Collection, M0539, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Speak in this slot.¹⁴² It appears as if Thompson was the only black woman to speak out either for or against the ERA at any of the official hearings on the amendment.

In Indianapolis, it proved difficult for white ERA activists to get black women involved despite an expressed desire to do so. According to long time activist Barbara Zimmer, “We were really interested in including minority women...we really wanted to involve everyone.”¹⁴³ Appeals to black women participants affected decisions on meeting locations, club dues, and specific policy positions that needed to be altered in order to meet the needs of a more diverse community. Organizers planned meetings on college campuses in Bloomington and Muncie, but transferred them to Indianapolis in an attempt to increase the representation by a wider demographic. Members of the Muncie NOW chapter remember that although “it was a white community, we did have a few black members,” indicating that black women were at least tentatively welcome at meetings and events held by feminist organizations.¹⁴⁴ Black women continued to be the minority at such meetings however, and rarely took leadership positions in the organizations.

At the organizational level, the HERA coalition boasted a lengthy list of Indiana and national organizations that supported ERA ratification in the state. This list included several important organizations from the local African American community, such as the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, the National Association of Colored Women, and the

¹⁴² ERA Indiana board members, “Suggestions for Joint Hearing Testimony,” no date, Box 1, Folder 1, Jane Fribley Manuscript Collection, M0546, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Sister Thompson addressed the popular perception that the ERA would not increase funding or availability of abortion, of which she opposed.

¹⁴³ Zimmer, 11-12.

¹⁴⁴ Muncie NOW Members, 9.

National Council of Negro Women.¹⁴⁵ However, even though they are listed as a supportive organization for HERA, in the meeting minutes for the Indianapolis Section of the NCNW from 1975 to 1981, the ERA does not appear as an agenda item at a single meeting, implying that the NCNW did not discuss the ERA as part of its regular meeting business.¹⁴⁶

With regard to the direct participation in the campaign itself, black women were not well represented. In a 1975 HERA brochure, only one black woman appeared among the pages of committee members and elected officers. Mag Mallory (R-Indianapolis) is listed as the special service representative for research, black women's caucus, and legislation. Of the dozens of officers, district representatives, and members of the various committees and advisory councils, the fact that the only black woman served as a direct representative to the black women's caucus shows a distinct separation between the social and political networks of the two groups of women.

Across the nation, black women from organizations like the NCNW, the AFL-CIO, the United Methodist Church, the National Black Feminist Organization, and many others, came out in open support of the ERA. Although there was no organization created specifically for black women in support of the ERA, many of these existing national organizations published articles and position papers and encouraged their black members to work for ratification.¹⁴⁷ An article on the 1980 conference "ERA: Impact on Black America" laid out the many arguments for black female support of the amendment.

¹⁴⁵ "Indiana and National Organizations Supporting the ERA," July 1975, HERA Manuscript Collection, M0636, Box 1, Folder 4, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

¹⁴⁶ National Council of Negro Women meeting minutes, no date, National Council of Negro Women—Indianapolis Section Manuscript Collection, M0539, Box 1, Folder 10, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

¹⁴⁷ Giddings, 345.

Eleanor Holmes Norton, Chair of the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, said “This amendment is important for all Blacks. Because of the central role that Black women play in the economics of the Black family, we cannot do without ERA.” Alexis Herman, the Director of the Women’s Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor, made a similar appeal to the position of black women in their families by saying “Thus for Black children and Black families, assuring that Black women have equal opportunity in American life is one of the most important links to overall progress for Black people as a whole.”¹⁴⁸ Conference conveners recommended that black organizations boycott states that had yet to ratify, and encouraged them to make ERA ratification a priority for their own states.¹⁴⁹ It is important to note that they did not encourage their members to join any new organizations related to the ERA, but to work instead for ratification through their existing networks.

Interestingly enough however, the ERA did not have nearly the same press attention in the *Indianapolis Recorder*, the weekly African American newspaper in Indianapolis, as it did in the *Indianapolis Star*. The week of the General Assembly’s ratification of the amendment, a front page article in the *Recorder* discussed the careers of the state’s first black female state senators, Julia Carson of Indianapolis and Katie Hall of Gary, Indiana. The article opens by stating that “Amid all the Equal Rights Amendment hubbub, two black women have quietly launched careers in the Indiana

¹⁴⁸ Alexis Herman served as Director of the Women’s Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor from 1977 – 1981. For more information, see the Department of Labor website at [Http://www.dol.gov/wb/edu/gallery.htm](http://www.dol.gov/wb/edu/gallery.htm).

¹⁴⁹ “The Equal Rights Amendment—Impact on Black America,” *Black Woman’s Voice*, April 1980, Page 8. Publication of the National Council of Negro Women. National Council of Negro Women—Indianapolis Section Manuscript Collection, M0539, Box 1, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Senate.”¹⁵⁰ This statement is the only mention of the ERA in the issue. The following week, the paper’s Legislative Report section included lengthy discussions of housing bills, the Civil Rights Commission, and potential laws affecting the aged population, but made no mention of the ERA’s ratification.¹⁵¹ This glaring omission raises questions about the black press and how it decided what issues were of importance to the black community. It is noticeable that the front page article on Julia Carson did not once mention her support of the amendment. Also of note is the fact that a column devoted to the activities of the Indiana General Assembly did not mention the results of this crucial vote. When asked, black men and women consistently expressed high levels of support for the amendment, but this support did not translate into high levels of activity or even attention on the part of the black community.

WHAT THEY DID TO PARTICIPATE

Black women often made the case that as the most discriminated-against demographic in American society, the ERA would be most beneficial to them. They argued that during the 1970s, the socio-economic landscape for black women was bleak. Sixty percent of all non-white women had worked in the workplace; black women earned 75 percent of what black men earned; more than 27 percent of all female-headed households were black, and of those, over 50 percent were below the poverty level; and the unemployment rate for black women was double the rate for white men at 11 percent.¹⁵² These statistics are not solely a result of gender discrimination however, and

¹⁵⁰ “State’s First Black Women Senators Make Their Mark on Legislature,” 22 January 1977, *Indianapolis Recorder*, sec. 1 p. 1.

¹⁵¹ “Legislative Report,” 29 January 1977, *Indianapolis Recorder*, sec. 1 p. 3.

¹⁵² Sedgewick and Williams, 24-26.

black women saw the ERA as important for racial as well as sexual relationships in society. Black women's consistently high support for the amendment did not translate into participation in NOW and other ERA-focused groups, but they supported the activities of such groups from within their own organizations.

Black women had a long tradition of activism within the black community through their own social networks. They experienced public social and political activity long before their membership in the civil rights organizations of the 1960s. In the late 19th century, church activity played a fundamental role in the cultivation of black women's activist roots. Women church members played important parts in all aspects of the church, including fundraising, missionary work, cultural activities, and organization. Although women did not traditionally serve in the ministry, they did occupy and maintain leadership positions in black religious organizations in Indiana. Their roles in the church gave black women status within their communities and helped them form social networks. Church groups also gave them a positive self-image and created a distinct black female community.¹⁵³

In addition to these church activities, by the 1920s black women's clubs had formed all over Indiana, including the Florence Nightingale Club, the Sisters of Charity, and the Rosebud Needle Club. Two black professional women founded the Women's Improvement Club as a literary club in Indianapolis in 1903. The following year, Lillian Thomas Fox founded the Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, which counted 19 black women's organizations under its umbrella. These early club members worked to eliminate lynching and to promote racial equality. Indiana had a chapter of the

¹⁵³ Darline Clark Hine, "Culture, Consciousness, and Community: The Making of African American Women's History." Paper presented as the Lawrence F. Brewster Lecture in History, November 1994, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina: 4-6.

National Association of Colored Women that worked to provide aid to indigent blacks and promote black women's club membership.¹⁵⁴ Indiana also had a section of the NCNW that worked to eliminate "any and all forms of discrimination and segregation based on race, religion, color, national origin, and sex."¹⁵⁵ The NCNW sponsored youth groups, participated in annual black history awareness efforts, hosted a Newcomer Tea for all women new to the Indianapolis area, and implemented programs on weight control, alcoholism, voter registration, volunteerism, and self-awareness. Black women in Indiana organized early and actively participated in women's organizations at the beginning of the twentieth century.

These black women's clubs were not closely affiliated with their white counterparts. A few white women's clubs and prominent club women made efforts to cooperate with and assist black organizations. May Wright Sewall of Indianapolis, president of the pioneering women's group the International Council of Women, also spoke at the first convention of the Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Black and white women's clubs cooperated on the issues of temperance and suffrage. White women from the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) worked with the union's African American branches and often spoke in front of black churches and organized groups. An African American branch of the Equal Suffrage League, organized in Indianapolis in 1912, met monthly with the six white branches of the league. The president of the black women's group explained the large attendance at such meetings by saying "We all feel that colored women have the need for the ballot that white women

¹⁵⁴ Thornbrough, 19-21.

¹⁵⁵ Collection Guide, National Council on Negro Women—Indianapolis Section Manuscript Collection, M0539, Box 1, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

have, and a great many more needs that they have not.”¹⁵⁶ These tentative ties formed between black and white women in what is traditionally referred to as first-wave feminism lasted until the 1960s, when the increased activism of both the Civil Rights Movement and the women’s movement altered relations between the two groups.

During the 1960s, many pressing issues motivated black women to join community and activist groups. Although both black and white women became politically active at this time, black women did not join integrated groups as much as they maintained ties to predominately African-American clubs and organizations. Black women participated in the struggles related to abolition, labor conditions, suffrage for blacks and for women, the anti-lynching campaign, and community development and preservation. Black women’s roles in organizing church activities, work and school programs, and sororities such as Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha, in addition to their key roles in such male-dominated groups as the Urban League and NAACP, introduced them to methods of organization and a variety of political and social tactics. Sociologist Bernice McNair Barnett believes that black women actively engaged in forms of protest against the oppression they faced as a result of their racial, gender and class status. She argues that the organizations formed during the course of this protest activity developed many of the same characteristics of other feminist organizations—participatory democracy, mutual respect, self-transformation, and a sense of community for participants.¹⁵⁷

Within their distinct groups, women in both white and black social networks taught, mentored, and even self-consciously trained each other in methods of community,

¹⁵⁶ Thornbrough, 24.

¹⁵⁷ McNair Barnett, 202-204.

social, and political activism. Among black women, this occurred in colleges, black sororities, black organizations such as the NCNW, black branches of white-run organizations such as the YWCA, and many other local groups. Black women networked through community centers like the Flanner House to improve the conditions of their neighborhoods. Black women's social groups did not leave as many written records as white women, which created the illusion that they were less active.¹⁵⁸ However, through organizations such as the NCNW, the YWCA, and other such community groups, black women actively participated in their communities and created a vibrant network from which future organizations could draw.

Through the course of the ERA time period, there were instances of ERA activity on the part of black groups. HERA member Mag Mallory spoke to the NCNW in October 1974 to address why the ERA mattered to black women. According to Mallory, the black woman posed a "membership and psychological affinity in overlapping groups. She has developed an acute sensitivity to the meanings of words, and has the ability to use them to bring people together." Mallory was also a member of HERA's Republican Statehouse Lobby team, and often encouraged legislators not to think of the amendment as a women's issue, but rather a civil rights issue. As a key member of the black political community, black organizations often invited Mallory to speak, and the ERA was one of her strongest causes.¹⁵⁹ Mallory's position as a black woman working on behalf of the ERA allowed her to link the amendment to the larger issues of equality in general and constitutional guarantees of equal rights for all citizens. Although Mallory participated in

¹⁵⁸ Linda Gordon, "Black and White Versions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945," *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History*, Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, editors. New York: Carlson Publishers, 1995: 459-461.

¹⁵⁹ "Speech by Mag Mallory to NCNW," 27 October 1974, HERA Manuscript Collection, M0636, Box 1, Folder 13, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

the ERA campaign, however, she maintained her ties to black women's groups and spoke on the amendment from the perspective of her race. Although black women and their organizations supported the amendment, in general, but black women's groups did not participate in activities that directly resulted in the ERA's ratification.

The impact of race cannot be discounted in the overall story of the ERA. The opposition to and national failure of the ERA has traditionally been understood as a reaction to the social changes made during the 1960s. Black women activists were members of both groups accused of making too many demands on the status quo, and therefore black women understood the conservative backlash as the rejection of something larger than the ERA. During a 1975 Boston rally against the ERA, protesters carried pickets reading, "Abortion is Murder," "Stop Forced Busing," and "Feminist Dominance Equals Communism." The opposition's merging of these seemingly disparate themes was striking to black women, who saw anti-ERA rhetoric as an attack on them as both women and blacks.¹⁶⁰ The participation of groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the John Birch Society in the anti-ERA campaign only solidified the relationship of the ERA opposition to other ideologically conservative organizations. Phyllis Schlafly, a well-known opponent of the ERA, stated during a 1975 debate in Georgia that the Supreme Court would apply sex to its rulings with the same tenacity that they had race, "and you know the court and government have put race into such a special category by which no one is allowed to discriminate for any reason no matter how reasonable it may seem to the persons who are doing it."¹⁶¹ By combining their apocalyptic messages of a future with true gender and racial equality, the opposition enflamed the conservative movement

¹⁶⁰ Sedgewick and Williams, 26-28.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 27-28.

that would carry over into the 1980s as the New Right. The ERA opposition was rooted in a complex ideology that combined these fears, reactions, and arguments that were as much a product of the Civil Rights Movement as the ERA debate itself.

CHAPTER 5

HUMBLE LITTLE HOUSEWIVES?: THE MOBILIZATION OF INDIANA'S ERA OPPOSITION

The lack of universal support among women was one of the main reasons for the national failure of the Equal Rights Amendment. Although the final vote on ERA ratification occurred in state legislatures with the decisions rendered largely by male representatives, the fact that the amendment did not receive universal support among women became a key point for those who opposed it. Across the county, the women who worked against the amendment organized and acted differently from the women who supported it. In Indiana, women's opposition to the ERA was characterized by a diverse and fluctuating set of arguments that ranged from constitutional issues like state's rights to more personal concerns regarding same-sex bathrooms and changes to traditional gender roles. This range and variety of arguments reflected the way conservative women conceptualized their political activity and their corresponding focus on individual, low-profile activities rather than public political action. In response to the quick organization of ERA supporters, a few outspoken women began arguing against the amendment at hearings, press conferences, and the luncheons of key organizations in Indianapolis. They did not form organizations to the same degree that proponents did, and they tended to prefer anonymous letter writing and phone calls to their representatives over actions that ultimately received the attention of the press.¹⁶² The women who opposed the amendment held a variety of perspectives, ideals and backgrounds that were ultimately reflected in their political activity regarding the ERA.

¹⁶² This preference is evident in the oral histories of antirratificationists used in this chapter. They did not discuss the need to form coalition groups or gain press attention, but instead talked about direct contact to legislators as the most effective form of activism.

Indiana's ratification of the ERA in 1977 was one of the most unexpected events in the amendment's history. Given Indiana's reputation as a politically conservative state, national proponents did not imagine there to be much of a battle in the state. During the early 1970s, the Republican Party, the party most likely to oppose the ERA, wielded considerable influence in state and local politics in Indiana. In the year that Indiana ratified the amendment, the state had a Republican governor, a Republican majority in the Indiana House of Representatives, and one Republican U.S. Senator.

In addition to these elected offices, Indiana also served as the site for establishing conservative organizations and maintaining them locally. Youth for Christ organized in Indianapolis in 1943, as did the John Birch Society in 1958.¹⁶³ The world headquarters of the conservative Church of God is located in Anderson, Indiana. While the majority of Hoosiers belonged to mainline Protestant organizations, in the early 1970s Indiana outnumbered all other states in the number of residents who were members of the German Baptist religion (frequently mistaken for Amish, German Baptists are forbidden to use television sets, radios, and musical instruments and tend to hold conservative social views). Archconservative groups have appeared in the state sporadically, including the People's Temple, founded by native Hoosier Jim Jones.¹⁶⁴

Sympathetic attitudes toward these organizations certainly gave Indiana the reputation for being socially and religiously conservative, but there was another factor in Indiana's opposition to the ERA. The state had a long tradition of opposition to any type of law giving more power to the federal government at the expense of the state. Historian

¹⁶³ Howard Peckham, *Indiana: A Bicentennial History*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1978: 93-95, 152.

¹⁶⁴ Seward, 86-88. The People's Temple eventually moved to California and then South America where it gained international attention when hundreds of members committed mass suicide.

James Madison argued that Hoosiers traditionally viewed the federal government with wariness.¹⁶⁵ The state tended to particularly oppose constitutional amendments that added to the jurisdiction of the federal government. The women who opposed the ERA in Indiana had a variety of arguments against it, but the state's rights argument became a primary focus of debates and legislative hearings across the state.

In Indiana, ERA opposition was rooted in a socially conservative political ideology with longstanding roots in the state's history. Previous ERA scholars however have tended to ignore the more complex political arguments made by those who opposed the amendment. Many of the secondary sources that analyzed the ERA debate did not initially focus on the women who opposed it. Early authors were more interested in discussing the feminist experiences, ideals, and organizations that developed during the 1970s, and often believed that those who opposed the amendment were simply reacting against the feminist movement. In the majority of cases this omission was a direct result of the intended scope of study for the particular author. Jo Freeman was studying organizational models within feminist organizations, for example, and only discussed antirratificationists when necessary. It is important to realize that as ERA supporters themselves, feminist scholars had a somewhat contentious relationship those who opposed the amendment. Antirratificationists tended to view ERA scholars with distrust and were often reluctant to be interviewed. According to Donald Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart, in order to gain access to the stories of those who opposed the ERA, they had to be honest about their own political position (they supported the amendment), assure the women of their scholarly intention, and promise confidentiality when

¹⁶⁵ Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History*, xiii-xiv.

requested.¹⁶⁶ Based on the amount of collections found in libraries and archives, one can assume that these women did not leave materials for public record as well, further complicating the matter of historical study. The lack of access to the stories of these women, when combined with the feminist-focused approach of many of the early ERA authors, created an imbalance of information with regard to the two camps.

Jo Freeman's work on the ERA almost completely ignores the women who opposed the amendment. In her last two chapters, when discussing the potential policy implications of ERA, she briefly addresses the emergence of the STOP ERA forces under the leadership of "noted right winger" Phyllis Schlafly. She describes the emergence of Schlafly's organization as a crisis that the supportive organizations had to address.¹⁶⁷ Janet Boles' work focuses on the conflict of the ERA campaign, so she did discuss the activities of the opposition and how supportive groups reacted to them. She described the personal characteristics of the women who opposed the amendment, but again, she presents the antirratificationists only as a catalyst for the activities of those women who supported it rather than a group worthy of study in their own right.¹⁶⁸ Jane Mansbridge's book on the amendment focused on the reasons for losing the ERA, which allowed her to address the opposition forces with more attention. Mansbridge argued that the ERA's main problem was its image as an issue that pitted woman against woman, and noted that "as fundamentalist women became more prominent in the opposition," it became impossible to argue that the amendment benefited all women.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Mathews and Sherron De Hart, x.

¹⁶⁷ Freeman, 220-221.

¹⁶⁸ Boles, 66-78.

¹⁶⁹ Mansbridge, 173-177 .

Ultimately, the work of Mathews and De Hart emerges as the analysis that most completely addresses the women who opposed the ERA, and many of their findings mirror the situation in Indiana. Based on extensive interviews with women from North Carolina, the authors devoted an entire chapter to those who successfully worked to prevent ratification. They address the main concerns of these women, including the apocalyptic future outlined for them by Phyllis Schlafly should the ERA become law, their association of ERA with abortion, and their belief that gender was a sacred construct and the women who wanted to deny that were in some way obsessed with being men. Apart from these moral reasons, many of the women who opposed ERA focused on the states' rights concerns, of particular resonance to southern women on the heels of the Civil Rights Movement. These women identified themselves as "humble little housewives" who believed they had a moral obligation to fight ERA.¹⁷⁰ Mathews and De Hart argued that it was the combination of these women and their male representatives in the state legislature that ultimately defeated the amendment, and they included an entire chapter on those representatives, their actions, and their tactics. The relationship between the antirratificationists and the lawmakers allowed the women to argue for the moral problems with ERA while providing the legislators with the proof that all women did not support the amendment. It also allowed the antirratificationists to be politically active while defending women's roles as housewives, because the most visible political activity was conducted by men in the legislature. In Indiana, the male legislators took the primary and public political role while the conservative women quietly supported them.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Mathews and De Hart, 158-172.

¹⁷¹ In Indiana, State Senator Joan Gubbins is an exception to this trend. For more information on her role in the campaign see page 91 of this thesis.

Although conservative women were fundamentally important to the ERA opposition, there are a scant few studies that focused exclusively on the role of conservative women in the struggle. Of particular note is Kent Tedin and David Brady's 1975 study of the women who opposed the ERA in Texas. Their goal was to see if these women matched the characteristics of the emerging "American Right." They divided the American Right into three categories: 1) a religious Right motivated by religious concerns, 2) a secular Right that is much less religiously focused and more concerned about maintaining the social order in the face of a communist threat, and 3) a segregationist Right that shares both of the above beliefs but maintains a fixed opposition to racial integration. They interviewed 154 women at an anti-ERA rally in Texas and compiled statistics to look for overall trends and similarities, and found that the women shared two characteristics. According to their findings, the two key characteristics of these women were their religious participation (Ninety-eight percent were church members, 2/3 of those considered themselves fundamentalists), and their provincialism (Sixty-five percent were from small towns). Similar to the demographics of the religious and secular branches of the American Right, the majority of the women came from the upper middle class and were motivated to political action by fundamentalist religious beliefs and a fear of declining morality and its potential to weaken the social order.¹⁷² Two years later Tedin, Brady, and their colleagues collected 156 surveys of women who supported the amendment and compared the results to their research data on women who opposed it. They were looking for differences in background and motivation between the two groups of women. As expected, they found

¹⁷² Tedin and Brady, "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Political Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement," 564-575.

moderate to large differences between the educational level, age, rural/urban location, church membership and political party affiliation of the two groups. They also found that the antirratificationists believed that their beliefs were in the mainstream, whereas the proponents recognized that they were lobbying for something that some people did find offensive. Both sides showed a complete unwillingness to compromise however, leading Tedin and Brady to predict in 1977 that the amendment would fail.¹⁷³ The rural/urban differences and the political party affiliation of the women in Indiana support Tedin and Brady's research. The researchers' findings that women who opposed the ERA believed their arguments to be the mainstream also played a key role in shaping the goals and strategies of the opposition in Indiana. This demographic research of the antirratificationists is important, but comprehensive analysis of these women in the context of the ERA literature did not come until later in the historiography.

In 1986, Joan Hoff-Wilson compiled a series of essays that examined the ERA debate following its recent failure. Much of the work focused on the opposition, looking for reasons for their success. Jane De Hart Mathews and Donald Mathews, writing a decade before their groundbreaking work on North Carolina, discussed the cultural politics of the ERA's defeat and attributed it to the "sense of revolution in the air" during the late 1960s and 1970s. In this context, they argued that conservatives lumped feminists together with students, war protesters, and Civil Rights activists, and blamed them for attacking traditional ways of life and societal organization. By the mid-70s, the students, war protesters and Civil Rights activists had all quieted down to some degree, leaving the

¹⁷³ Kent Tedin, David Brady, et al. "Social Background and Political Differences Between Pro and Anti ERA Activists," 395-407.

feminists and the ERA as a primary target of the growing conservative constituency.¹⁷⁴ A recent analysis of Schlafly's Eagle Forum describes the primary enemies of organization members as moral decline and liberalism. All of the issues raised by the antirratificationists at the national level, including education reform, anticommunist activity, and an opposition to ERA ratification, related to their larger problem with the moral development of the country.¹⁷⁵ Many of the arguments made by antirratificationists in Indiana addressed the feminists in the larger context of recent attacks on society in general, many of which had nothing to do with the ERA issue itself.

Antirratificationists in Indiana used these moral arguments to frame a conservative dialogue with supporters regarding the ultimate impact of the amendment. In her 1972 "Phyllis Schlafly Report," Schlafly argued that her biggest concerns regarding ERA were its potential to 1) reduce women's Social Security benefits, 2) eliminate separate athletic programs at the high school and college level, 3) make all same-sex schools illegal, 4) eliminate the separation of sexes for physical education purposes, 5) abolish separate prison cells for men and women, and 6) abolish separate public restrooms.¹⁷⁶ At the national level, Schlafly tended to stress two main policy implications of the ERA, including 1) its affect on denying wives the support of their husbands and mothers the custody of their children, and 2) its potential to draft women into the military.¹⁷⁷ By raising legitimate concerns regarding traditional gender roles should the amendment be ratified, antirratificationists made sure that the supporters in Indiana had to respond in such a way as to reassure legislators that the ERA would not cause sweeping changes in

¹⁷⁴ Joan Hoff-Wilson, *Rights of Passage: The Past and Future of the ERA*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986: 44-53.

¹⁷⁵ Marshall, 323-335.

¹⁷⁶ Mansbrige, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Freeman, 221.

society. This ultimately caused the supporters to become much more conservative in their approach.

The presence of this diverse range of arguments became apparent at public forums devoted to the amendment. At the March, 1973 State Senate hearing on the ERA, speakers against the amendment came from a variety of backgrounds and spoke on a wide range of issues. Charles Rice of the University of Notre Dame Law School opposed the amendment because it was like “using a sledgehammer to swat a housefly.” He also argued that the amendment would have unpredictable effects, including allowing homosexuals to marry. The audience applauded a speech by Indianapolis homemaker Susan McWhirter Ostrom, who made an emotional plea to the ERA’s destructive possibilities and criticized women’s groups who claimed to speak for all women without having much evidence. Gary Brainard, a student at IUPUI, attacked the possibility of women fighting in combat, and the Reverend Greg Dixon, although cut short by time limits, hinted at the moral implications of the amendment. The opposition speakers were organized by State Senator Joan Gubbins (R-Indianapolis), who at one point pulled a speaker from the podium when she began ranting on the problems of regional government.¹⁷⁸ Although the ERA raised several problematic issues for antirratificationists, speakers needed to stay focused on the amendment in order to remain effective.

For activists at the local level, one of the major oppositions to the ERA continued to be its potential family law implications. Many housewives feared that the ERA would eliminate all benefits designed to ensure a husband provide for his wife and children.

¹⁷⁸ “Rival ERA Camps Turn Out For Hearing Before Senate Vote,” sec. 1 p. 4.

They also feared it would undermine the trend for mothers to automatically win custody of children in divorce proceedings. With the creation of no-fault divorce statutes, many women no longer felt secure in their marriages and resisted any attempt to further erode the provisions designed to protect them.¹⁷⁹ Many of these women were responding to a widespread feeling that their status as mothers and wives was under attack. During the period between 1962 and 1978, the percentage of women working outside the home rose from thirty-seven percent to fifty-eight percent nationally, making the stay-at home housewife the minority for the first time in history.¹⁸⁰

Although these trends caused housewives' to worry about their declining status, the amendment ultimately forced all women to examine the role of their gender in society. Indianapolis antiratificationist Buelah Coughenour described her belief in equality for women, but did not believe that equal had to mean "the same." She argued that women who did not acknowledge the basic physical differences between men and women were in denial. Because of these differences, she believed that women should receive extra breaks at work, special provisions for pregnant women and mothers of small children, and smaller weight lifting requirements, and she could not understand why unions had switched their support in favor of the amendment. She especially worried about the draft, that boys would "ultimately lose their lives making up for the differences in strength between men and women."¹⁸¹ When looking at the variety of reasons women opposed the amendment, "the opposition" emerges as a diverse group of women who, like supporters, became politically active because of an issue that would potentially affect their lives. Unlike the supporters however, their participation did not take a directly

¹⁷⁹ Mansbridge, 92-95, 107-108.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 107-108.

¹⁸¹ Buelah Coughenour, interview by Jeannie Regan, 9 November 1995, p. 3-5, Private Collection.

organizational approach. They were generally reluctant to take visible action, but concerns about the protections and rights of women as workers, wives and mothers ultimately caused some women to speak out publicly in opposition to the amendment.

THE ORGANIZATIONS

The level of organizing seen in the pro-ERA camp did not exist among women who opposed the amendment. Antirratificationists did not form their own organizations for the purposes of opposing the amendment, and many of these women did not tend to join political groups at all. The range and diversity of arguments made by women who opposed the amendment reflected the way conservative women conceptualized their political activity. They did not want to be seen as political activists in their understanding of the term, and focused on individual, low-profile activities rather than organized, focused, and public political action. This perception of themselves as non-political became increasingly problematic as the ERA debate increased in intensity in Indiana.

Early in Indiana's 1973 Legislative Session, proponents and opponents geared up for the ratification battle. On January 30, opponents engaged in debate with supporters at an open public meeting sponsored by the Young Women's Christian Association. Indianapolis attorney Evelyn Pitschke emerged early as a devoted opponent of the amendment, and debated Virginia Dill McCarty at the event. Pitschke spoke out regarding ERA's effect on "over 300 laws" in Indiana that ultimately benefit women and children. She argued that "the machinery already exists for women to have equal rights. . . Any woman in America who wants a certain job, all she has to do is claim the right and

be willing to make the sacrifice.” Her main argument, which happened to resonate with conservative legislators, was that the country did not need an equal rights amendment.¹⁸²

Although the early ERA campaign in Indiana had a few vocal critics, there were no organizations that took the lead in the opposition’s effort. In February, 1973, the *Indianapolis Star* reported the formation of Scratch Women’s Lib (SWL), the only local and independent anti-ERA organization to formally participate in the ERA proceedings. The story came from SWL spokesperson and Indianapolis lawyer Evelyn Pitschke, who described her position as legal advisor to Phyllis Schlafly and the national STOP ERA organization. At the press conference, she praised the actions of State Senator Phillip Gutman (R-Fort Wayne), president pro-tempore of the State Senate, who “fairly” required a full Senate hearing before any action would be taken on the amendment.¹⁸³ Although Pitschke continued to be a key player in the ERA opposition, this was the only mention of the SWL organization in the press.

At a hearing in March 1973, the *Star* noted that opponents seemed better organized than at a House hearing the previous week, however, there was no mention of any official anti-ERA organizations in the state. The speakers all represented themselves as individuals or organizations neither part of an alliance nor an organization formally created to focus on ERA.¹⁸⁴ At a Public Affairs Committee public hearing two years later, opponents included Linda Snap of the Indiana Farm Bureau who warned of the “extreme confusion” the amendment would cause. Pitschke appeared again, although not affiliated with any particular organization, calling the ERA the “equal obligation amendment.”

¹⁸² “Pro, Con Views Voiced on ERA,” *Indianapolis Star*, 31 January 1973, sec. 1 p. 12.

¹⁸³ “Scratch Women’s Lib Unit Fights Passage of ERA in State Senate,” *Indianapolis Star*, 17 February 1973, sec. 1 p. 10.

¹⁸⁴ “Rival ERA Camps Turn Out For Hearing Before Senate Vote,” *Indianapolis Star*, 9 March 1973, sec. 1 p. 4.

And a local chapter of STOP ERA appeared for the first time in Indiana's press, represented by Sue Townsend, who warned that ERA would eliminate all laws obligating husbands to support their wives.¹⁸⁵ Individual women appeared in the press linked to the various arguments they made, and, as in the case of the Indiana Farm Bureau, a woman speaker would sometimes appear linked to a particular organization that had did not actively participate in the antirratification effort.

Although not a locally formed organization, STOP ERA was the most visible, active, and focused organization to oppose the amendment in Indiana. The various chapters of STOP ERA that formed at the state levels did not keep statistics on membership. If anything, they appeared to be organizations in name only, without regular meetings or organizational structures. The chapters were relatively hierarchical, with a leader, often hand-picked by Schlafly herself, taking instructions from Schlafly and organizing activities at the local level. Schlafly held conferences in St. Louis where Midwestern women would learn how to dress and talk.¹⁸⁶ Schlafly relied heavily on these local leaders, and often gave them latitude to tailor the specific arguments made on behalf of STOP ERA to the concerns of the local community, and more importantly, the sympathies of the local legislators.¹⁸⁷ Indianapolis city-council member Buelah Coughenour joined STOP ERA in 1974, eventually becoming Schlafly's friend. Schlafly called Coughenour at home one evening and asked her take over operations in Indianapolis. Coughenour was initially hesitant, but ultimately accepted the job. As is evident in Coughenour's appointment to a leadership position based largely on her friendship with Schlafly, there were no officers or organizational policies in the STOP

¹⁸⁵ "Equal Rights Passed by House Panel, 10-1," *Indianapolis Star*, 22 January 1975, sec. 1 p. 4.

¹⁸⁶ Coughenour, 10-11.

¹⁸⁷ Mansbridge, 115.

ERA chapters—just jobs and tasks delegated to volunteers through Schlafly. Coughenour described the organization as a “rigid dog,” with “Phyllis as the whole structure.”

In addition to this key difference in organizational structure, the antiratificationist groups did not receive nearly the amount of press coverage that the supportive groups received, nor did they want it. These groups were protective of their privacy and did not give interviews or press conferences, or conduct activities designed specifically to get press attention. Their tactics were not designed to win support for ERA opposition among the general public, indeed they already believed that to be the case, but to prevent the legislature itself from voting for the amendment. They were also fiercely protective of their funding sources, and denied any official affiliation with more established groups like the John Birch Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Christian Crusade.¹⁸⁸ This denial most likely stemmed from a desire to appear as a humble group of concerned housewives and not as an organized group affiliated with the growing conservative political movement.

The women who opposed ERA ratification did not have experience with joining political organizations, and with a few notable exceptions, certainly did not form groups to focus exclusively on this particularly issue. The single most high-profile anti-ERA organization in the state was the local chapter of STOP ERA, which itself was a branch of the multi-issue Eagle Forum. The messages of the anti-ERA women reached the state legislators, rendering them effective without the same level of organization seen on the

¹⁸⁸ Boles, 78-79. Other scholars of the New Right address the issue of funding sources for these early conservative political organizations. Allen Hunter discusses the ideological inheritance, and by extension, the network of conservative organizations and their funding sources, in his article “In the Wings: New Right Organization and Ideology,” *Radical America* 15 (1-2) 1981: 113-138. He further discusses the connection of anti-feminism as an issue to these New Right organizations in his work with Linda Gordon, “Sex, Family, and the New Right: Anti-Feminism As a Political Force,” *Radical America* 11-12 (6-1) 1977-1978: 9-25.

part of proponents. Although they were ultimately unsuccessful in Indiana's ERA campaign, this method of organization subtly reinforced their notion that women did not have to be politically organized to have an impact on politics.

THE WOMEN WHO ORGANIZED

The women who fought against the ERA in Indiana for the most part described themselves as homemakers. Homemakers tended to be more conservative on social issues like interracial marriage, homosexuality, and abortion, and rejected many of the revolutionary societal changes of the 1960s and 70s.¹⁸⁹ They shared a profound distrust of women's groups like NOW, which found that in 1974, only seventeen percent of their membership consisted of women who described themselves as homemakers.

Homemakers preferred instead to be involved in church groups as social networks and to stay away from overt political activity.¹⁹⁰ According to Senator Gubbins, many of the women who joined the local chapter of STOP ERA already knew each other from non-political church groups and PTA activity, but most were mothers by occupation.

Following the dramatic changes of the 1960s and 70s, homemakers heard the radical views of the feminists, and many became ready participants in groups that wanted to "turn back the clock" on changing norms of behavior and attitudes. Phyllis Schlafly targeted her appeals to both ideological conservatives and housewives, knowing that both groups would share an innate opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment.¹⁹¹ She argued that the ERA was the byproduct of a movement that was determined to destroy the

¹⁸⁹ Rebecca E. Klatch, *Women of the New Right*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987: 131-139.

¹⁹⁰ Mansbridge, 109.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 110.

traditional family structure, appealing to the fears of homemakers who already felt their status, protections, and benefits weakened by changing notions of womanhood.¹⁹²

Although the majority of STOP ERA members were homemakers, the women who spoke out against the ERA did show some degree of variety.¹⁹³ Senator Joan Gubbins served as the research chairperson for the Goldwater for President Committee, and was a delegate to the Indiana Republican State Convention in 1966, 1968, and 1970. She was a member of the National Federation of Republican Women and the Citizens Forum, and was elected as a State Senator for 6 terms. When she entered the Senate, she was the only woman working with 49 male legislators, and “totally believed in equality for women.”¹⁹⁴ According to Gubbins, her main problem with the ERA was that there were already laws on the books that would do a better job combating problems with equal pay and job discrimination than the federal amendment being proposed. Gubbins knew other STOP ERA members from her activity in State Republican circles and membership in the National Women’s Legislative Group.¹⁹⁵ She served as the vice president of the National Commission for the Status of Women, and was a delegate to the International Women’s Year meeting in Texas in 1977. In spite of all these accomplishments and extracurricular activities, when asked, she described her occupation as “homemaker.”¹⁹⁶ In an effort to either create solidarity with other homemakers or to distance herself from the “women’s libbers” she so opposed, Gubbins downplayed her public accomplishments in an effort to mold herself into the kind of woman she was trying to defend.

¹⁹² Mansbridge, 102-104.

¹⁹³ Although there are no records available for Indiana’s STOP ERA chapter, both Coughenour and Gubbins assert that the majority of their members were concerned housewives in their interviews with Jeannie Regan.

¹⁹⁴ Joan Gubbins, interview by Jeannie Regan, 26 July 1995, p. 1-3, Private Collection.

¹⁹⁵ Gubbins, 6.

¹⁹⁶ Rebecca Shepard, editor, *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly, 1900-1984*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1984: 165.

Beulah Coughenour was another name frequently associated with the ERA opposition movement in Indianapolis. The daughter of an Iowa minister, Coughenour had a biology degree and a career transcribing medical tapes for a local radiologist. Coughenour got involved in politics out of an expressed concern for the future. She was particularly worried about the threat of communism to her way of life, and believed that the ERA movement in its attempts to ignore all differences between the genders was really just a plot to inject socialist thinking into American politics. She eventually agreed to participate in local debates, and gained enough confidence to run for public office.¹⁹⁷ Through her position as a city-councilwoman in Indianapolis, Coughenour was active and vocal throughout the entire ERA campaign in Indiana.

Evelyn Pitschke, another high profile Indiana opponent of the ERA, was admitted to the Indiana bar in 1945, and later admitted to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court. Her Indianapolis law firm focused on divorce, wills, child custody, support and family law.¹⁹⁸ In addition to her professional experience, she served as the main legal advisor to Phyllis Schlafly and the national STOP ERA organization. A few other women appear in press reports regarding anti-ERA activity, including Linda Snap of the Indiana Farm Bureau and Jane Tower Scott, publisher of the *Anderson Herald*. In addition to these public speakers, Beulah Coughenour remembers the wife of a Bloomington professor, a female business owner from Bloomington, and a former Miss Indianapolis all coming to help her with STOP ERA activities during her tenure as president of the local chapter.¹⁹⁹ All of these women spoke out in public against the ERA representing opinions in addition to those of housewives and mothers. This diversity of backgrounds

¹⁹⁷ Coughenour, 1-6.

¹⁹⁸ *Indiana Legal Directory*, 1987.

¹⁹⁹ Coughenour, 10.

and beliefs eroded the supporters' claims that the ERA spoke for all women and that those who spoke out against it were simply sheltered or unenlightened.

Without any official records on STOP ERA's membership it is impossible to say how many antirratificationists were indeed homemakers. Coughenour and Gubbins both claimed that the majority of anti-ERA activists fell into this category, but then again, they both described themselves as homemakers when from their biography it is easy to see that they were much more. This raises interesting questions about the self-perception of the antirratificationists and why they chose not to organize and to work quietly in opposition to the amendment. In both their words and their actions they were subtly making the point that antirratificationists were the opposite of feminists in their politics and lifestyle. According to an unidentified antirratificationist from outside of Indiana,

The women's liberation movement looks down on the housewife. She should be the most respected person as she is bringing up future generations. But women's liberation puts her down and says, "All she does is stay home all day and wash dirty diapers." ERA won't do anything for these women.²⁰⁰

Conservative women saw feminism as eliminating choice for women with regard to their careers, which put homemakers on the defensive. Many women in Indiana supported concepts of equal pay for equal work and that while men and women were not the same, they should be treated equally. What they could not accept was what they perceived as hidden in the ERA: a direct attack on a woman's right to stay home, raise her children, and be provided for by her husband. Taking away this right from women under the guise of equality was unacceptable to the antirratificationists, who transferred this fear to the entire women's movement and everything it stood for.²⁰¹ This sense of distrust created a

²⁰⁰ Klatch, 132-135.

²⁰¹ Gubbins, 6-9, Coughenour, 11-12.

tension between feminists and housewives that could not be overcome, with the ERA at the symbolic center.

HOW THEY ORGANIZED

Although they organized quite differently, the women who opposed the ERA strategized in much the same way that women who supported the amendment did. Without regularly scheduled meetings, publications, or workshops to plan, STOP ERA members got together less frequently and on an as-needed basis. They did however want to reach key lawmakers and have a presence at public forums, hearings and legislative votes. Although they focused on lower-profile actions and tactics, as the campaign wore on they realized the need to have a presence at hearings and legislative votes. At the national level, Schlafly herself organized mass mailings targeting key legislators, bussed women in to high-conflict areas to lobby and picket, and testified at congressional hearings on the amendment. She even traveled to Indianapolis to deposit bags of opposition letters on the steps of the statehouse. Once Congress ratified the amendment, Schlafly understood that she had lost a key stage of the national battle, and focused early and intently on key states where the ERA would have a tough time passing.²⁰²

In Indiana, although Scratch Women's Lib appeared early in ERA debates, its subsequent lack of press coverage suggests that it was either very small, short-lived, or ineffectual. The woman linked with this group in the early account, Evelyn Pitscke, went on to participate in other ERA activities, but no one else was ever associated with the group. The brief existence of Scratch Women's Lib illustrates the point that the women

²⁰² Freeman, 221.

who opposed the amendment were not out to create organizations for the sake of organizing, but felt that they could be more effectual quietly and on an individual level.

The local chapter of STOP ERA was the primary organization in the state devoted to anti-ERA activities and maintained a presence throughout Indiana's ERA campaign. Antiratificationists in Indiana would gather at Coughenour's house to write letters and plan. President Coughenour described the budget for the group as nonexistent, and noted that neither she nor anyone else who was helping her knew how to apply for grants. Coughenour coordinated activities from her bedroom.²⁰³ Coughenour described her organization's budget as dependent on "how much our husbands will give us," and bragged of the fact that most of her women were at home and not out agitating, in stark contrast to the ERA supporters.²⁰⁴ In 1977, Senator Gubbins released a press statement regarding the contributions received by STOP ERA during the previous year. The list did not include names of the contributors, which Coughenour attributed to the fact that much of the money "came in the form of small cash donations."²⁰⁵ Without a budget for formal announcements and advertisements, the opposition relied heavily on word of mouth and volunteer efforts to spread the message. Information on events and activities most likely spread through churches, clubs, and social organizations.²⁰⁶

Participating in debates was one of the only times that the opposition received any press attention. Senator Gubbins, Evelyn Pitschke, and Buelah Coughenour often

²⁰³ Coughenour, 8.

²⁰⁴ "1200 Jam Hearing as ERA Arguments Presented Final Time," sec. 1 p. 1.

²⁰⁵ House Approves ERA; Quick Senate Action Seen," sec. 1 p. 1.

²⁰⁶ Gubbins, 7. Kathleen McCourt's 1977 work on the women who opposed the integration of a Chicago neighborhood during the 1960s discussed what motivated a non-political woman to move from "concerned" to "active". She believed that such women needed persuasion from a friendly source to join with others and work for change, and that often this friendly source was a church acquaintance or someone she knew from a social group. For more information, see McCourt, *Working Class Women and Grassroots Politics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977: 101-115.

represented the opposition in these public forums. Letter writing was another important aspect of the opposition's approach. The few women who officially belonged to STOP ERA would gather at Coughenour's house to write letters, and often the women would bring friends, which served to increase the amount of women participating.²⁰⁷

Organization leadership and public speaking consisted of three to four primary women in Indianapolis. But quiet, targeted volunteer activities, often organized through word of mouth, brought many more women into the fold.

The targeted activities aimed at reaching legislators in the General Assembly do not appear to have had much of an effect on the arguments made by the legislators themselves. The fact that opposition letters were coming from women as well as men boosted the case that the feminists were not actually speaking for all women, but the male legislators did not focus on the same issues as women who opposed the amendment. At the hearing prior to the 1977 House vote, Representative John Sinks (R-Fort Wayne) opened the debate with claims that the amendment was vague, Representative Richard Delinger (R-Noblesville) argued that ERA would supercede state's rights, and the charismatic Representative Robert Jones, Jr. (R-Indianapolis) cited Biblical passages and claimed that the "Big Fella" had already explained to us how He wanted us to live. At the hearing preceding the House's Vote on the measure, Representative Dellinger warned of ERA's danger to state's rights, Representative Dan Burton (R-Indianapolis) predicted ERA would destroy the legislative power of the 50 states, while only Representative Jones, Jr. threatened that it would nullify all laws that protect women.²⁰⁸ The difference between the points made during ERA hearings by the male legislators and the female

²⁰⁷ Coughenour, 11.

²⁰⁸ House Approves ERA; Quick Senate Action Seen," sec. 1 p. 1.

antiratificationists raises questions about the actual impact that the women had on the arguments made by the men.

As a member of both the female opposition and the Legislature, Senator Gubbins became a prominent ERA figure as the debate entered the General Assembly. Acting on her own and not as a representative of any organization, Senator Gubbins often had to represent all women who opposed the amendment in the General Assembly, in a room filled with men giving their perspectives and reasons. In 1977, the *Star* reported that Senator Gubbins “blasted” Virginia Dill McCarty in the House corridors during the debate for spending tax payers’ money to fight for the ERA during McCarty’s tenure as chief counsel to the Marion County Prosecutor.²⁰⁹ When the ERA did not make it out of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, Senator Gubbins co-sponsored her own ERA and sent it to the floor. Her bill, similar to many such compromise bills opposed by the federal amendment proponents, granted equality to women but did not interfere with any “rights, benefits, or exemptions conferred by law upon persons by reason of sex.”²¹⁰ As predicted, her proposition failed. As the final Senate vote neared, Senator Gubbins made impassioned speeches raising the issues of homosexual marriages, increased sexual deviancy, female soldiers and motherless children, and asked those questioning the goals of the ERA to examine the motives of the “homosexual and socialist organizations” that supported it.²¹¹ Although Gubbins, particularly as the proponents gathered the needed votes to ratify, argued against the amendment on a number of different issues, she did

²⁰⁹ “House Passes ERA 2d Time,” *Indianapolis Star*, 28 January 1975, sec. 1 p. 12.

²¹⁰ “Floor Test Due in Senate for ERA After All,” *Indianapolis Star*, 27 February 1975, sec. 1 p.

11.

²¹¹ “ERA Ok’d After Call By Carter,” sec. 1 p. 1.

tend to raise issues associated with morality and traditional female roles in contrast to the states' rights argument made by her male colleagues.

The arguments made by the antirratificationists shaped the conservative nature of the ERA debate in Indiana. Although the legislators themselves focused on the state's rights' issues raised by the amendment, the female opposition forced the proponents to address questions of gender roles and protective legislation that required a careful response. A few of the antirratificationists raised such issues as same-sex bathrooms and homosexual marriage, but proponents made light of those claims and did not fear their impact on the legislative outcome.²¹² The more delicate questions about the role of women in society and the law's responsibility to protect them or treat them as absolute equals forced the proponents to engage in a debate that supported feminist goals without alienating the conservative Indiana General Assembly.

Despite their decentralized organization, the ERA-opposition put up a hearty fight from the federal passage in 1972 until Indiana ultimately ratified the amendment in 1977. The women who opposed the ERA in Indiana did so in much lower-profile ways than the women who supported it. They did not participate in public rallies, hold press conferences, or conduct public workshops on ERA activities. They lobbied their legislators, wrote letters, and participated in debates, which, although ignored by the media, ultimately made them successful in getting the attention of their representatives. They did not, moreover, form organizations for the specific purpose of ERA activity. A few joined the local chapter of STOP ERA, and more still participated as individuals by writing letters and contacting representatives, but in the end, it was a far different approach than the tactics used by supporters. Opponents believed that they already had

²¹² Wagner, 22-25.

the support of the public, and therefore did not need press attention to raise awareness among women in the state. All they had to do was to prevent the state legislature from ratifying the amendment, and so they targeted their approach to meet that goal. Although the tactics of opponents worked in enough states to prevent ratification, in Indiana, opponents had to ultimately concede defeat.

CHAPTER 6

INDIANA AND THE ERA: MIDWESTERN FEMINISM AT WORK

Soon after the Indiana General Assembly ratified the ERA in January 1977, antirratificationists in the state began a campaign to rescind the affirmative vote. Although in Indiana this effort was unsuccessful, Nebraska, Tennessee, Idaho, Kentucky, and South Dakota all passed bills rescinding their ratification. The movement to overturn the ratification votes of many states illustrates the fact that proponents could not take their victory for granted. In Indiana, where the amendment passed by a single vote, feminists by no means received a sweeping mandate for women's equality in the state. However, they successfully placed Indiana into the column of states that ratified the amendment, which is an important chapter in Indiana women's history and shows that Indiana's feminists, conservative as they were within feminist politics, mobilized effectively.

Indiana was the last state to ratify the amendment and did so at a time when popular support at the national level had significantly declined. Supporters in the state mounted an aggressive campaign soon after the federal passage in 1972, and the Indiana General Assembly voted on the amendment in 1973, 1975 and 1977, at which point they finally ratified. Supporters did not start working any later than any other state, but saw success at a later time. The strategy of working to elect pro-ERA senators to the General Assembly took time, and proponents had to work through several legislative cycles to put legislators into office who would vote yes on the amendment. While the late ratification date seemed surprising within the context of the ERA's timeline, it is the result of an approach on behalf of Indiana's activists that took some time to implement.

In addition to the time frame, the arguments made in Indiana set the state apart from other high-conflict ERA campaigns. Although certain parts of the Indiana ERA coalition supported such feminist positions as abortion rights, rights for gays and lesbians, and government funded child care centers, those arguments came from the younger women's groups affiliated with university towns. The bulk of Indiana's ERA activity came from groups in Indianapolis, from the more mainstream women's organizations like the Indiana Women's Political Caucus (IWPC) and the League of Women Voters (LWV). These organizations had older membership demographics and focused on women's issues such as equal pay for equal work and getting more female representation in politics. Their members shied away from the more controversial social issues raised by the younger groups and opted for a slower strategy that reflected their goals and perspectives.

This thesis examined three groups of women involved in the ERA campaign in Indiana: the women who supported the amendment, the black women who participated in the campaign, and the women who opposed the ERA. The women who supported the amendment can be further divided into two groups—the activist groups such as NOW based in nearby college towns, and the more mainstream organizations in Indianapolis that focused solely on the amendment. The women in the mainstream groups tended to focus more on women's economic and political status, often at the expense of the social demands being made by the activists. In order to work for social issues, the ERA included, the established, mainstream groups such as the LWV and the IWPC formed coalition groups to focus solely on the ratification effort. They conducted workshops, participated in debates, and hired lobbyists, but tended to stay away from large rallies and

headline grabbing activities that associated the ERA with the women's liberation movement at large. The proponent groups successfully disconnected the ERA from hot button social issues and tactics and addressed it as a more traditionally political proposition.

In Indiana, as across the nation, ERA proponents had ideological friends in the black women's groups working for racial equality. These two groups, however, had trouble overcoming the historical gap between their social networks. The black women's groups in Indiana like the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and African-American state senators such as Julia Carson and Katie Hall openly supported the ERA, but that support did not translate to shared political activity in conjunction with pro-ERA groups. Although a few black women participated in the ERA campaign enough to speak on the topic at black women's club meetings and public debates, only scant evidence of such activity on the part of African-American women exists. By and large, the amendment was an issue that resonated with white women's groups more than with their black sisters.

As expected, conservative women's groups played a role in the state's ERA campaign, although they formally organized to a far lesser degree than did proponents. A few key activists, including State Senator Joan Gubbins and STOP ERA President Buelah Cougenhour were effective in delaying the state's ratification of the amendment, but ultimately they did not have the same level of political organization seen in the proponent groups. STOP ERA and for a short time, Scratch Women's Lib, were the only official groups formed to oppose the amendment in the state. The bulk of activity came from

individual activists writing letters to their legislators and the newspapers and attending public meetings on the topic.

When comparing these three groups of Indianapolis women who participated in the ERA activism of the 1970s, it is noticeable how divided women actually were on many of the issues designed to bring them together. The consciousness-raising theories adopted by many women's groups asked women to listen to one another and accept each others' points of view, when the political reality in Indiana showed that women often disagreed on very fundamental issues, ranging from social topics like abortion rights to political tactics and activities. Women's organizations, whether the white ERA proponents, African American club women, or white antiratificationists, organized along existing lines of communication and friendship. These groups developed a sense of community where like attracted like, creating an internal homogeneity of race, class, and ideology that led to effective political activist groups representing distinct positions. This organizational tendency resulted in an "us" versus "them" mentality that pitted women against women, and the personal nature of the issues raised by the ERA made women feel especially strong about their positions and the necessity of their actions.

Relationships between proponents, black club women, and antiratificationists grew tense, as did the relationship between different branches of pro-ERA activists that focused on passing the amendment in Indiana. The women who formed HERA and the other ERA-specific organizations that worked in the state knew each other from their previous club activity in groups such as the LWV and IWPC and had already-established methods of accomplishing their goals through traditional legislative means. These women came from similar backgrounds (often professional, upper-middle-class, white), and lived

in close proximity to one another in Indianapolis while the women who were active in NOW chapters were often younger in age and lived in college towns like Muncie and Bloomington. The women from the LWV and the IWPC focused on gaining more representation for women within the traditional political system, and were not interested in addressing the many social concerns in which NOW was involved. They formed HERA and the other ERA-specific groups as a channel for this work, since they did not want it to conflict with the goals of the LWV and IWPC. NOW, in contrast, did not separate the ERA from its other priority issues, and for that reason the groups' members carried the reputation of the national feminist movement with them to their activities in Indianapolis and across the state. When antirratificationists and oppositional legislators referred to the evil of the women's movement and the ERA, it was often the issues of child care, lesbianism, and threats to women's traditional roles, issues associated with NOW, that they criticized. Women in the more mainstream, legislative-focused groups thus felt some conflict with their sisters in the ERA movement.

NOW at the national level was often considered on the conservative end of the spectrum of feminist ideology. Although they believed in women's equality enough to become politically active, the discontented middle-class white women who came of age during the 1950s were still older in age and less radical in thinking than their younger sisters who formed groups devoted to a total revolution in societal gender roles. At the national level, these older women believed in the legislative process and often worked for legislation that guaranteed a woman's right to equal pay for equal work, birth control, and her equality in society. In Indiana, this appreciation for the legislative process allowed NOW members to work with the Indianapolis groups on a successful effort to elect pro-

ERA senators in the 1976 state elections. NOW President Marion Wagner spearheaded this effort, and worked closely with her counterparts in HERA and ERA Indiana. It is this effort that led to the successful ratification vote in January 1977.

The rift between NOW and the ERA-focused groups in Indianapolis came from NOW's association with other issues that did not enjoy nearly the support in Indiana that they did elsewhere in the nation. How many people in the state supported child care, abortion rights, and protection for gays in lesbians in the 1970s is not known, but the legislators in the Indiana General Assembly believed that their constituents opposed these measures and that they should vote against all things associated with the women's liberation movement as they understood it. HERA, the LWV, the IWPC, and other such organizations distanced themselves from such issues on the grounds that they did not participate in any activities related to these concerns, whereas NOW publicly supported the controversial platforms and mentioned them in the same sentence as the ERA. The presence of abortion-rights banners at NOW-sponsored ERA rallies worried the ERA activists in Indiana, who believed that in order to be successful in the state, the issues had to be separated.

The idea that the Equal Rights Amendment had to exist separately from the more controversial women's movement at large gets to the complex problems facing Midwestern feminists. Particularly in Indiana, proponents knew that they faced a General Assembly with a long tradition of political conservatism and had to tailor their arguments accordingly. The presence of so many religious conservatives gave the state a reputation for social conservatism that would oppose the ERA on the grounds that it threatened traditional gender roles. Indiana's longstanding tradition of opposition to any measures

that gave the federal government more power at the expense of state's rights, however, created a bigger problem for the ERA activists. Even if they could convince legislators that the ERA would not significantly alter gender roles as they knew them, they had to also convince the lawmakers that the increase in federal power was worth it.

This resistance to federal intervention is one of the hallmarks of Midwestern political ideology.²¹³ Midwesterners have traditionally prided themselves on a sense of calmness and stability in contrast to the histories of conquest and resistance that defines the South and the West. The Midwest has a reputation as a place of nostalgia where traditional values abound. Phyllis Schlafly is from the Midwest, but so is Betty Friedan and a multitude of other innovative characters and progressive thinkers. It is the perception however that is important, which affected the way that state legislators interpreted the wishes of their constituents, ultimately informing their votes on social issues such as the ERA. On a social level, Midwesterners tend to be moderates, and approach issues like women's equality and affirmative action with caution. According to historian R. Douglas Hurt, Midwesterners pride themselves on maintaining a centrist approach to social issues and enjoy their position as a swing vote between the conservatism of the South and the liberalism of New England.²¹⁴ Indiana's late-term, one-vote ratification of the ERA fits squarely into this centrist definition of Midwestern politics.

Orienting women's political activism within the context of this Midwestern framework is another matter entirely. Indiana women certainly pursued legal, political,

²¹³ Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History*, xiv.

²¹⁴ R. Douglas Hine, "Midwestern Distinctiveness," *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*, Andrew R.L. Cayton and Susan E. Gray, editors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001: 170-171.

and social changes to improve their status during the 1960s and 70s. Their success with the ERA, however, gives the impression that Indiana was a state with a large feminist movement, which is not the case. A few months after the ERA ratification, men and women who opposed the feminist movement outnumbered feminists four to one at the International Women's Year (IWY) convention in Indianapolis, where they selected an overwhelmingly pro-life and anti-ERA delegation to represent Indiana at the national IWY convention. Still, many progressive feminist measures met with success in the state, including the notable passage in 1984 of a city law declaring pornography a form of violence against women, and a successful court challenge to the banning of women from areas of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.²¹⁵ These events brought Indiana women into the national spotlight for their political activism and challenged the national perception of Indiana's conservatism on gender issues.

When looking at ERA activism in the state, the tactics used by the ERA proponents stand out as particularly astute. Indiana proponents understood the political makeup of their state and General Assembly enough to work within the system and ratify the amendment. In the end, the Midwestern feminists that worked to ratify the ERA fit into the mold of Midwestern politics in general in that they were traditional in some ways and progressive in others. In the end, they prided themselves on their political centrism and distanced themselves from radical ideas and actions. The leaders of Indiana's Civil Rights Movement used a similarly cautionary approach, which influenced the African American women who worked from black women's groups to support the ERA. Their experience working to end racial discrimination gave black women an understanding to

²¹⁵ Connie J. Zeigler and Frances Dodson Rhome, "Women's Movement (1960-Present)." *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, David J. Bodenhammer and Robert G. Barrows, editors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994: 1442-1445.

the methods required for success in Indiana. There surely were women in the state who fell on the more radical end of feminist politics, but ERA supporters quieted them enough to get their message through to the legislators in Indianapolis. This understanding of the delicate balance between political activism and centrist politics defined the women's movement in Indiana with regard to the Equal Rights Amendment. Understanding Indiana's ratification of the ERA sheds light on how different groups of women mobilized politically, and more broadly, illustrates the nature of Midwestern feminism. The feminist perspective may not have been the majority viewpoint in Indiana, but on the right day in 1977, supporters convinced enough legislators to vote for the amendment, respectfully but loudly adding a chapter to Indiana women's history.

Thirty years later, the ERA is still a part of political discourse in America. In March 2001, on the 29th anniversary of the 1972 congressional passage of the ERA, Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Stephen Horn (R-CA) reintroduced the ERA in the House, while Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) reintroduced it in the Senate. Over sixty co-sponsors joined Rep. Maloney, who noted that the time was ripe for the reintroduction of the amendment. With a 50-50 Republican/Democrat split in the Senate and more women in government than ever before, Feminist Majority President Eleanor Smeal said "We must keep introducing the ERA until women win equality."²¹⁶

Since Alice Paul wrote the original ERA in 1923, women have certainly made gains in many aspects of their public and private lives. However, women's leaders and Congress members still stress the importance of a constitutional amendment guaranteeing their equality. Recent attempts to gut Title IX (which prohibits sex discrimination in athletic programs receiving federal funds), the successful blocking of the United Nations

²¹⁶ Congress Members Reintroduce ERA," 23 March 2001, *Feminist Daily News Wire*.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the fact that even today, women still earn only 73 cents to the man's dollar, drive home the reality that women are still not equal in American society. According to Martha Burk, Chair of the National Council of Women's Organizations, "Unless we put into the Constitution the bedrock principle that equality of rights cannot be denied or abridged on account of sex, the political and judicial victories that women have achieved are vulnerable to erosion or reversal."²¹⁷

The ERA continues to be an important issue for feminists and women's rights supporters, just as it continues to represent an important political victory for those who opposed it. At the Conservative Political Action Conference in February 2003, the conference celebrated the 20th anniversary of the ERA's defeat by honoring Phyllis Schlafly. Schlafly recounted her battle with the ERA which she fought from her "kitchen table" against a "motley collection of harridans, harpies, hags, and disheveled lesbians."²¹⁸ Feminism continues to be a key target of today's conservative political movement, even as the Republican Party attempts to reach out to more women. Katherine Harris and Ann Coulter are extolled as the new political woman, as women who support the Republican Party, favor low taxes and state's rights, and most of all, attack liberalism in general and feminism in particular.²¹⁹

Women in Indiana are certainly aware of the state of modern feminism, but on January 18, 2002, they gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of their own success ratifying the ERA. Former activists and supporters filled the Unitarian Universalist

²¹⁷ "Congress Members Reintroduce ERA."

²¹⁸ Jo Freeman, "The Feminist Ghost at the Conservative Political Action Conference," no date, [Http://www.seniorwomen.com/articles/freemanCPAC.html](http://www.seniorwomen.com/articles/freemanCPAC.html).

²¹⁹ Freeman, "The Feminist Ghost at the Conservative Political Action Conference."

Church in Indianapolis to remember their activities and successes, and to see old friends. Present at this event were Representative Julia Carson and then-candidate for the Indiana House of Representatives David Orlichter, both of whom worked the crowd with the knowledge that the women present still made up a valuable part of their constituency. When looking around the room, I saw women of all ages, backgrounds, and even races, proving that the ERA continues to be a rallying point for diverse groups of women today. Even though the ERA no longer appears on the platforms of state politicians or dominates the editorial pages of local papers, it does continue to have political implications.

During this anniversary celebration in Indiana, women remembered the various activities they conducted as part of their effort to ratify the ERA. In addition to the open speakers podium where activists discussed the plight of women today, tables contained information related to gay and lesbian rights, abortion rights, attacks against Title IX, and efforts to improve pay equality between the sexes. Many of the women were members of NOW, LWV, and various college women's groups from throughout central Indiana, proving that even today, women from groups with diverse interests and methods of political participation come together to recognize the significance of the ERA. Today, however, support for the ERA does not dominate the women's movement as it did during the 1970s.

The group of women who attended the anniversary celebration shared their stories and memories about Indiana's ERA campaign. By coming to such an event, these women were able to stand up and be proud of the work they did during the 1970s to bring Indiana into the modern women's movement and disprove the perception that feminism did not exist in the Midwest. This question of Midwestern feminism will need several more

regional and local studies until it begins to come to some universal conclusions. Although Indiana continues to vote Republican in Presidential elections, the make up of its city and state government are increasingly diverse, as is its population. Having attended Take Back the Night rallies in Bloomington and abortion rights protests in Indianapolis, I can easily see that feminist ideals and political tactics have made a lasting impression on women in the state and expect that Indiana women will continue to be active in politics far into the future.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

ELOISE E. SCROGGINS
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Indiana University, Indianapolis

Education

Indiana University-Purdue University (IUPUI), Indianapolis, IN
M.A. in U.S. History, Public History Concentration, 2003.

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
B.A. in History, 1998.

Work Experience

Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN

Exhibitions Research Assistant, Exhibitions Department—5/98 to Present
Primary research coordinator for exhibitions at the society's headquarters in Indianapolis. Responsible for developing visitor experience, content, text, and interactives in the IHS exhibition galleries. Locate graphics and artifacts to support exhibition design. Work with designers and educators to develop public program offerings that coincide with the exhibition plans.

Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, Indianapolis, IN

Research Intern, Cemetery Survey Project and Underground Railroad Research Project—5/02 to Present
Internship duties split between two projects. Locate, measure, and survey cemeteries across central Indiana as part of the DHPA's ongoing effort to catalogue every cemetery in the state. Work with collections at the Indiana State Library to survey county and family histories for references to local Underground Railroad activity.

Indiana State Museum, Indianapolis, IN

Curatorial Assistant, Part Time—4/99 to 10/99
Responsible for rotation of artifacts in permanent exhibition gallery. Processed incoming collections and conducted annual inventory of large collection of sports and military artifacts. Participated in research for large exhibition program for the new Indiana State Museum that opened in May 2002.

Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN

Museum Store Associate, Part Time—1/99 to 4/99

Worked in Museum's gift shop as part of visitor service program. Occasionally volunteered as gallery interpreter to participate in visitor exhibition experience.

Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN

Asian Art Department Curatorial Intern—5/98 to 1/99

Involved in the preparation for the largest exhibition at the IMA in 1998, including research for publications and creation of a docent training guide. Researched and filled requests for information regarding the Asian Art collection for outside patrons and exhibition staff.

Indiana University Main Library, Bloomington, IN

Library Assistant—8/94 to 5/98

Worked in several departments throughout IU's library system in Bloomington, including circulation, interlibrary loan, and processing and finding lost books. Honored as Employee of the Month in November, 1997.