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The "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Exhibit: Second-Wave Feminism, Historical Memory, and the Birth of a "Texas Women's History Industry"

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The “Texas Women: A Celebration of History” Exhibit: Second-Wave Feminism, Historical Memory, and the Birth of a “Texas Women’s History Industry”

by

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Thesis

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The "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Exhibit: Second-Wave Feminism, Historical Memory, and the Birth of a "Texas Women's History Industry"

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Gretchen Voter Abbott, M.A.

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Touring the state in the early 1980s, the "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" exhibit was the first attempt to create a comprehensive, public Texas women's history narrative. Surprisingly, the exhibit was organized not by academics or museum professionals, but rather by the Texas Foundation for Women's Resources—a nascent second-wave feminist non-profit organization composed of up-and-coming political activists such as Ann Richards, Sarah Weddington, Jane Hickie, and Martha Smiley. Through an analysis of the exhibit, as well as archival research and oral histories with many of the participants, this thesis explores the reasons that a feminist organization with finite resources would choose to focus on the production of women's history as a tool of feminist activism. The "Texas Women" exhibit was a uniquely effective way for the members of the Texas Foundation for Women's Resources to express their feminist values in a culturally palatable way and to create embodied moments of feminist consciousness for their audience. Furthermore, it paved the way for the organization's future successful feminist projects, fed the production of Texas women's history initiatives around the state, and served as a springboard that helped launch Ann Richards' successful political career.

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Introduction

On the evening of February 7, 1982, over 700 members of Austin's political, social, and academic elite gathered at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum to celebrate the opening of the first ever large-scale Texas women's history exhibit. While "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" had already been touring the state for approximately a year, the project had been spearheaded by an Austin-based feminist organization called the Texas Foundation for Women's Resources (TFWR) and, as such, the event was a symbolic homecoming. According to one reporter who attended the evening's festivities, "They gathered on that cold night—in tuxes, glittering gowns, and furs—to sip champagne and salute the Austin opening of "Texas Women: A Celebration of History."[1] Unabashedly spectacular, the event included an "elaborate" five-foot high cake, a live performance by Texas-born Broadway star Mary Martin, a narrated slide show with sound effects, and a toast by Lady Bird Johnson and Martin with a "Texas-sized empty champagne glass."[2] The festivities were co-chaired by Ann Richards, an up-and-coming local politician and founding member of TFWR; and Liz Carpenter, a prominent national ERA activist and former press secretary for President and Lady Bird Johnson. In front of a cheering crowd, Richards and Carpenter gleefully opened the

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[1] "Texas' Historic Women Come Out of 'Never Land,'" *San Antonio Express*, February 9, 1982. The Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 15, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[2] Ibid.

exhibit with the proclamation, “We have arrived. At last, after 5,000 years, we have arrived.”[3]

The jovial mood of the opening, however, masked over three years of intensive research by an army of predominantly amateur historians and women’s rights activists who had canvassed the state in an unprecedented attempt to document the history of Texas women. It also obscured an even more complex struggle for control over the meaning of political power, Texan identity, second-wave feminism, and femininity. The signature question around which this thesis revolves is why a group of committed feminist activists – not professional historians - with finite resources and time would choose to create a women’s history exhibit as one of their first organizational projects. The following chapters attempt to provide an answer to this question.

The late 1970s was a moment of intense anxiety and debate about the meaning of gendered, cultural, and regional identities due to a series of profound social transitions. Life in Texas was changing dramatically. Thanks to exponential growth in industrial trades such as “agribusiness, defense, aerospace, oil, and leisure,” what is broadly construed as the “Sunbelt South” enjoyed an economic explosion at a time when other areas of the country faced severe decline and the new workers and retirees that poured into these states contributed to drastic diversification, urbanization, and other demographic changes.[4] Politically, the region also shifted from being staunch southern democrat to overwhelmingly conservative republican at the same time that it developed a

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[3] “Mary Martin Flies By Show Opening,” February 8, 1982, *The Daily Texan.* Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

[4] Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001: 108-109. Print.

newfound national political clout.[5] Texas, perhaps more than any other state, grappled with this new world, transitioning rapidly from a "semi-colonial" economy to a much more urban, industrial, and Republican state.[6]

This was also a time when gains made by the women's rights activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s finally became concrete in the everyday lives of most women and men who struggled to adjust to new, ambiguous, and conflicted definitions of womanhood and manhood.[7] While legal victories which began to rectify structural inequalities between the sexes presented a partial road map of appropriate behaviors, there was no clear and undisputed manual on how to do such everyday things as raising one's children or expressing one's sexuality. These gendered transitions were made even more complicated by internecine disagreements between different branches of the women's rights movement and a growing conservative backlash against feminisms that were magnified and dissected in national and local media. By the mid and late 1970s, cultural feminisms and celebrations of women's supposedly unique differences became increasingly popular, at the same time that men were increasingly encouraged to explore their own feminine sides. [8]

Finally, the late 1970s was a period of renewed interest in historical production and exploration of the meaning of citizenship in the United States because of lavish

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[5] Ibid. 106.

[6] Randolph B. Campbell. *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003: 438-439. Print.

[7] Beth Bailey. "She 'Can Bring Home the Bacon': Negotiating Gender in the 1970s." *America in the Seventies*. Ed. David Farber and Beth Bailey. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004. 108. Print.

[8] Bruce J. Schulman. *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001: 171-178. Print.

national Bicentennial celebrations, as well as burgeoning social, ethnic, and women's history movements that sought to reconsider who the subjects of history could be and to rewrite the very definition of history itself.[9] At a moment when the meaning of American identity, Texas identity, and gender itself were all in flux, many new and diverse groups laid claim to power and identity through historical narratives.

Within this context, the highly publicized "Texas Women" exhibit served multiple purposes for its creators. On a personal level, participating in this project forged deep, and in many instances life-long, bonds between many of the women who were involved, nurturing within them a sense of connection to each other and to the Texas women who had come before them, and giving them what they describe as a life-altering opportunity to experience what it felt like to literally change history. At the same time, it provided an opportunity for the ambitious, privileged, mainly white feminist activists on the board of TFWR to promote—and include themselves—within a powerful historical narrative about the importance of women's leadership in the history of Texas.[10] In a region that was highly invested in the mythology of respectable white womanhood and a

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[9] For a useful examination of the ways that Texas history has been contested by multiple groups, see: Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007, Print; and Richard R. Flores. *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. Print. For information on the U.S. Bicentennial see: "Interview with Melissa Hield, November 9, 2008"; Christopher Capozzola. "It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country": Celebrating the Bicentennial in an Age of Limits." *America in the Seventies*. Eds. David Farber and Beth Bailey, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas: 2004. 29-49. Print.; and John Bodnar. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.Print.

[10] In this thesis, I use "feminist" to describe the women's rights activism of the TFWR because this is the term that they use to articulate their commitment to creating structural equality and respect between genders. I also use the term "feminist" as a short-hand throughout much of my research to describe different varieties of pro-women activism. It is important to recognize, however, that not every pro-woman activist would have self-identified as feminist, but may have instead preferred other terms (e.g. "womanist"). Wherever possible, I have tried to use the appropriate term where it is known.

national climate that was increasingly hostile to feminism, this historical narrative served as a strategic and culturally acceptable format to stake their claim to political authority and Texan identity, while expressing both their feminist values and their anxieties about changing notions of womanhood. It also gave them a unique opportunity to reach out to divergent constituencies and allies, hone their political and fundraising skills, and construct a powerful statewide network of male and female supporters—which had a profound impact on the political careers of the members of the Foundation, particularly Ann Richards.

In addition to their political interests in the exhibit, however, many of the TFWR women were equally as focused on transforming the way that history was produced and taught within the state and country and in legitimizing women's history as a field of academic inquiry. In this regard, they were similar to many other popular and academic women's history initiatives that sprang up around the country during the 1970s and 1980s. [11] They wanted nothing less than to create what they explicitly called a "Texas Women's History Industry" and to spark other regional women's history movements around the country. [12] To this end, they researched and published one of the first bibliographies on women's history,[13] helped form a prominent women's history archive,[14] produced a women's history book for children,[15] presented at national and

[11] For information on the early years of the women's history movement, see: Sara M. Evans. *How Women Changed America at Century's End*. New York: The Free Press, 2003. Print.; Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. New York: Penguin Books, 2000. Print.; and Judith P. Zinsser. *History & Feminism: A Glass Half Full*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993.Print.
[12] "Creating a Texas Women's History Industry." Unpublished conference presentation, co-authored by Ruthe Winegarten and Frieda Werden, June 1981. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 37a, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[13] Ruthe Winegarten. *Texas Women's History Bibliography*. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources: Austin, TX. 1980. Print.
[14] The Women's Collection at Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

regional academic conferences,[16] communicated with and advised other grassroots popular women's history organizations,[17] and lobbied for the inclusion of women in the Texas State Handbook and in state textbooks, [18]among other initiatives.

This thesis will examine the complicated meaning and impact of the "Texas Women" exhibit using research derived from four main sources: archival materials related to the development of the exhibit and the early years of the TFWR; oral histories with twelve significant members of the organization and/or the exhibit's research staff; an analysis of the exhibit itself, which was recorded in a published exhibition catalog and a large segment of which is on permanent display at Texas Women's University in Denton, Texas; and an analysis of national and regional media coverage of second-wave feminism, Texan womanhood, and popular history from the 1970s.

Historiographical Foundations: Feminisms, Historical Memory, and Texan Identity

In tackling this project, I am engaging with contemporary historiographical conversations about the relationship between feminist activism, the politics of location,

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[15] Mary Beth Rogers, Sherry A. Smith, & Janelle D. Scott. *We Can Fly: Stories of Katherine Stinson and Other Gutsy Texas Ladies.* Austin, TX: Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1983. Print.

[16] "Creating a Texas Women's History Industry." Unpublished conference presentation, co-authored by Ruthe Winegarten and Frieda Werden, June 1981. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 37a, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[17] See, for example, "Field Visit to National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, NY on Friday, Sept. 4, 1981" memo from Ruthe Winegarten to Mary Beth Rogers, September 9, 1981. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 28, Folder: National Women's Hall of Fame, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX and "Letter from Sherry A. Smith to Cecile H. Malone, August 17, 1982." Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 32, Folder: Cecile Malone, Atlanta, Women in Georgia History Exhibit, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[18] See, for example, "Letter from Ruthe Winegarten to Alton Bowen, July 7, 1980." Box 37a, Folder: Textbooks, Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

and the role of historical memory. My research builds upon other scholarship around three main questions: How do we fit the TFWR's Texas feminisms into our broader narrative of the second-wave feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s? How and why have feminist activists constructed historical memory for strategic political purposes? And, finally, how were late twentieth-century Texas women influenced by a regional emphasis on the importance of historical memory and elite white women's privileged cultural role as gatekeepers of that memory?

Historiography and Regional Second Wave Feminisms

Recent scholarship suggests that our narrative of the second wave feminist movement is reductive because it privileges the work of activists in predominantly Northeastern urban centers while overlooking feminist experiences in other regions.[19] To a large extent, this leaves open questions about the extent of feminist activity in other parts of the country, as well as variations in its expression. Examining the work of one group of Texas second-wave feminists, as well as their interactions with other feminists around the country, gives us the opportunity to explore how cultural and regional differences may have impacted the needs, priorities, and lived experiences of women's rights activists, as well as their ability to form coalitions with like-minded organizations. Useful questions in thinking about this would include the following: How did feminists in

[19] See, for example, Judith Ezekiel. *Feminism in the Heartland*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002. Print.; Susan K. Freeman. "From the Lesbian Nation to the Cincinnati Lesbian Community: Moving Towards a Politics of Location." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9.1/(2000): 137-174. Print.; Stephanie Gilmore. "The Dynamics of Second-Wave Feminist Activism in Memphis, 1971-1982: Rethinking the Liberal/Radical Divide." *NWSA Journal* 15.1 (2003): 94-117. Print.; and Anne M. Valk. *Radical Sisters: Second Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington D.C*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008. Print.

Texas make their feminism legible, meaningful, and practical within their context? How did their feminism help them to construct their identities as Texans? How did they view themselves in relation to other feminists and how were they seen by other feminists? What types of feminist activism did they emphasize and what issues did they prioritize? Why or why not was this successful? What unique challenges did they face? And, finally, what patterns or connections begin to emerge—if any—between the activisms of the TFWR and those of other feminists in other regions?

This study suggests that the TFWR's cultural context played a significant role in the ways that its members expressed and experienced their feminism. Many of the TFWR members describe the difficulties of navigating a cultural context in which elite white women felt uncomfortable being overtly political and transgressing appropriate gender boundaries. They also provide evidence that Northeastern feminists underestimated their abilities based upon stereotypical beliefs that equated all women with a twang with frivolous southern belles—despite the fact that the TFWR personally identified much more strongly with notions of plucky frontier womanhood than with Scarlett O'Hara. Equally as interesting, it appears that the members' identity as Texans was deeply informed by their feminism, and vice versa. Through the "Texas Women" exhibit they articulated a strong narrative of Texan femininity that gave them personal strength and motivated their activism.

I want to emphasize, however, that the TFWR activists studied here are not representative of all Texas second wave feminisms, nor of all feminisms in the broader region. Nor did the TFWR speak with one voice, although they shared many similar

perspectives and experiences. Although not frequently recognized, there is considerable evidence that there were other, very different expressions of women's rights activism in Texas, indeed, in Austin itself, at the same time—in particular a rich body of activities led by African American and Chicana women that needs desperately to be explored.[20] This thesis joins others in urging us to move beyond arguments that conceptualize second- wave feminisms, and even Texan women, as monolithic.

Feminisms and Historical Memory

While many scholars have defined the meaning of historical memory as it relates to their work, I find the characterization offered by Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith in their introduction to the 2002 *Signs* thematic journal issue on memory and history to be most useful. [21] They suggest that historical memory, or as they term it, *cultural* memory, is, "an act in the present by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested, norms, conventions, and practices…Acts of memory are thus acts of performance, representation, and interpretation…What a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony…and are also marked

[20] These feminist expressions ran the gamut from more traditionally radical guerilla activisms and publications to more traditionally liberal focuses on structural political inequalities, as well as activisms that blur these lines entirely. See for example, Judie Walton Gammage. "Quest for Equality: An Historical Overview of Women's Rights Activism in Texas, 1890-1975." Diss. North Texas State University, 1982.Print.

[21] For research on historical memory, power, and public history, see: David Glassberg. *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. Print; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger., eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1996. Print.; Michael G. Kammen. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Knopf, 1991. Print; and Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Print.

by gender, race, and class."[22] In addition to concisely and clearly articulating the enmeshed strands of power, standpoint, interpretation, and culture that makes historical memory so powerful and contested, Hirsch and Smith also convincingly argue that feminist methodologies can be particularly fruitful for its analysis. This is because, "theorizing cultural memory through the lens of feminism does not merely foreground the dynamics of gender and power. It also applies feminist modes of questioning to the analysis of cultural recall and forgetting."[23] According to this argument, a feminist paradigm is not only uniquely sensitive to issues of standpoint, marginalization, and agency, but also inspires a uniquely ethical response to the research performed on the topic. Hirsch and Smith describe this as a philosophy of creating, "responsible and responsive" modes of knowledge which "can become…political modes of solidarity," at the same time that they "warn of the risks of even such a well-intentioned identificatory practice and the inevitable appropriations that inflect a politics based on empathy."[24]

In my own research, particularly through my oral histories with TFWR participants, I have strived to undercover the nuances of power and position that thread through this story and attempted to reflect this "responsible and responsive" practice. This has, at times, been difficult, particularly when my own perspective on the meaning of women's history has at times been at odds with the philosophies of my interviewees. For example, I am perhaps more focused on analyzing power dynamics than in re-inserting exemplary women into historical narratives, although I recognize that I have the

[22] Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith. "Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction." *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 28.1 (2002): 5-6. Print.
[23] Ibid.11.
[24] Ibid.13.

luxury to do so because of the early women's historians, such as the TFWR women, who came before me. I am also painfully aware of the ethical ramifications that entail from writing history about persons who are not only still living, but also can potentially be impacted by the story that I construct. I have realized that my personal responsibility as a historian is to always be respectful and accurate in sharing the perspectives of my interviewees, despite any disagreements that we may have, while at the same time using archival materials to provide a critical distance from the data and a point of reference for analysis. As part of this research ethic, I have taken pains to frequently use the original voices of my sources. I believe strongly that this is a valuable check on my own interpretations as a researcher, but also that the sources can represent much better than I can their meaning and intentions.

While Hirsch and Smith's *Signs* thematic issue includes a number of wonderful articles that seek to apply a "feminist lens," to issues of historical memory, none focus on organized feminist political activity. Indeed, despite a vibrant body of scholarship that has examined the relationship between public history, historical memory, and political power, as well as abundant evidence that feminists have frequently constructed historical memory for strategic purposes, scholars have only recently begun to explore the

significance of this work to the overall political goals of women's rights activists.[25] This new research suggests that feminist groups have frequently prioritized the production of historical memory in order to construct narratives that legitimize their activism, to encourage the development of group and individual feminist identities, and to express pro-women values. For example, Benita Roth's book *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* argues that Chicana feminists deliberately searched for and identified with historical Chicana female role models in order to provide justification within their community for women's rights activism.[26] Voichita Nachescu's recent article, "Radical Feminism and the Nation: History and Space in the Political Imagination of Second-Wave Feminism," also argues that "from the very beginning of the women's liberation movement's second wave, radical feminists engaged in a process of revision and reinterpretation of American history, of both women's history and the history of feminism. This series of rereadings played a crucial role in forming the identity of the new social movement that [sic] early radical feminists used the long history of feminist organizing (what is today termed 'the first wave') to both invoke predecessors for their own activism and define their political

[25] For examples of books that hint at the role that women's history has played in women's rights activism, see: Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990: 39. Print.; Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. New York: Penguin Books, 2000. Print.; Sara M. Evans. *How Women Changed America at Century's End*. New York: The Free Press, 2003, Print.; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History*. New York: Vintage, 2007. Print.; and Katherine H. Adams and Michael L Keene. *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008. Print.

[26] Benita Roth. *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 139, 159. Print.

vision."[27] As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich comments in her book, *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History*, an emphasis on historical memory was an "essential quality of the new feminism. Second-wave feminists rediscovered the past in the act of making their own history."[28]

The deliberate construction of women's history has also been, as Joan Scott points out, a method for "disrupting" conventional narratives of gender in order to create new opportunities for "re-imagining" women's potential. She writes:

> Since at least the eighteenth century, feminism has used history in different ways at different times as a critical weapon in the struggle for women's emancipation. Feminism's History {sic} has offered demonstrations, in the form of exemplary instances from the past, of women's worthiness to engage in the same activities as men…It has provided heroines to emulate and lineages for contemporary activists—membership in fictive families of history makers. Feminism's History has exposed as instruments of patriarchal power stories that explained the exclusion of women as a fact of nature…The production of knowledge about the past…has provided the substantive terms for a critical operation that uses the past to disrupt the certainties of the present and so opens the way to imagining a different future.[29]

[27] Voichita Nachescu. "Radical Feminism and the Nation: History and Space in the Political Imagination of Second-Wave Feminism." Journal for the Study of Radicalism 3.1 (2008): 30.
[28] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History. New York: Vintage, 2007: 208.
[29] Joan W. Scott. "Feminism's History." Journal of Women's History 16.2 (2004): 8-9.

Finally, new research also suggests that it is those women's rights activists who actively engage in the construction of historical memory for political purposes who our textbooks, commemorations, and narratives remember. For example, Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene point out that, "the best known figures of the woman suffrage movement in the United States" are Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Mott instead of women such as Alice Paul, because they actively wrote biographies and autobiographies about their women's rights activism. In turn, these tomes influenced which suffrage leaders were memorialized in other histories, sculptures, and state-sponsored remembrances. [30] Indeed, as Victoria Lamont's work on women suffrage memorials in Wyoming suggests, women's activism bears the risk of being misappropriated for political purposes by other interest groups when it is not documented by the activists themselves. In her article, "'More Than She Deserves': Woman Suffrage Memorials in the 'Equality State,' she demonstrates that, "the terms by which woman suffrage was deemed memorable in Wyoming were at odds with the historical material itself: Political women were frowned upon in Wyoming; hence, memorials were erected to women who played a relatively minor role in the movement, while the most active suffragists were demonized as mannish office seekers…This fragile foundation rendered

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[30] Katherine H. Adams and Michael L Keene. *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008: xi-xii. Laura E. Nym Mayhall makes a similar point, arguing that, "In the 1920s and 1930s, a small group of former suffragettes created a highly stylized story of their participation in the Edwardian suffrage campaign that equated militancy with service to the nation during the First World War…This narrative gathered adherents when a new generation of feminist activists and scholars, in the process of writing women into history, accepted the assessments of [this] small group of women…" Laura E. Nym Mayhall. "Creating the Suffragette Spirit: British Feminism and the Historical Imagination." *Women's History Review*, 4.3 (1995): 319-320. Print.

these memorials vulnerable to critique by twentieth-century historians who characterized suffrage as a gift given to women by a chivalrous legislature."[31]

As I will demonstrate, the TFWR used the "Texas Women" exhibit in order to help construct their feminist identities and to critique other second-wave feminisms, but their historical heroines, narratives, and ultimately their feminist philosophies, were at times vastly different from those mythologized by other second wave feminists. They were particularly aware of their historical legacy and took pains to document their truly noteworthy achievements for posterity.

Historical Memory, Gender, and Texas Identity

Texas is arguably the state that is most invested in, and most well-known for, its prioritization of historical memory in shaping its collective self-identity. Preeminent scholar of historical memory, W. Fitzhugh Brundage notes the, "remarkable degree to which a mythic Lone Star identity has gained a hold on the national and international imagination…Texas is unusual in the degree to which its recalled past is integral to its modern identity" and argues forcefully that the state "cannot be understood without coming to terms with its collective memory." [32] The Texas mythologies that have traditionally dominated public memory have been deeply masculine and white, revolving around symbolically weighty events, such as the Alamo, that are rife with bravado and amplifying the "loud, brash, extravagant, and rustic" characteristics that seem "an

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[31] Victoria Lamont. "'More Than She Deserves': Woman Suffrage Memorials in the 'Equality State.'" *Canadian Review of American Studies* 36.1 (2006): 17. Print.

[32] W. Fitzhugh Brundage. "Foreward." *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. Eds. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007. xii, xv. Print.

exaggeration of American traits."[33] Nevertheless, there are "multiple 'collective memories' of Texas' past and, increasingly over the past several decades, different groups who have clamored to share in the constructing of those collective memories."[34]

Surprisingly, considering the highly masculine nature of many of these historical narratives, it has been elite, white women who have usually been the shapers of collective remembrances—in the process, carving out opportunities for themselves to become cultural authorities who constructed powerful historical and political discourses.[35] According to Greg Cantrell, "[Texan women's] groups such as the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, for example, have historically played a significant role in the production of a nostalgic, heroic, masculinized version of Southern history, both viewing themselves as and fighting to remain the "guardians of that 'holy past'."[36] Indeed, for several decades the ability to effectively remember and memorialize the dead was considered a biological trait of women, granting

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[33] Ibid. xii.

[34] Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. "Introduction: A Study of History, Memory, and Collective Memory in Texas." *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. Ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007. 5. Print.

[35] See, for example: Gregg Cantrell. "The Bones of Stephen F. Austin: History and Memory in Progressive Era Texas," *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. Ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007. 39-74. Print; Kelly McMichael. "Memories Are Short but Monuments Lengthen Remembrances": The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Power of Civil War Memory." *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. Ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007. 95-118. Print.; Holly Beachley Brear. "We Run the Alamo and You Don't: Alamo Battles of Ethnicity and Gender." *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. Ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 2000. Print.; and Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, eds. *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003. Print.

[36] Gregg Cantrell. "The Bones of Stephen F. Austin: History and Memory in Progressive Era Texas*," Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. Ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007: 61. Print.

them a pseudo-scientific "natural" authority over this sphere of activity.[37] While many of these women genuinely wanting to memorialize soldiers lost in war, their commemorative work also provided them with opportunities to express their moral values, to ensure that women's Civil War activities as mothers and wives were not forgotten, to forge group identities through "a sense of the past and an aspiration for the future," and to achieve personal prestige. [38] Significantly, this cultural authority also gave elite white women the chance to "make their [class and race-based] claims to power and wealth appear to be a natural and inviolable part of history."[39] Finally, cultivating historical memory provided these women with concrete opportunities to interact with community and political leaders, speak in public, and develop useful fundraising and leadership skills—at a time when their opportunities to do so were severely limited. Ultimately, this kind of political activism, "represented an acceptable public and culturally powerful position for women" until the early decades of the twentieth century, when men increasingly became interested in taking control of the production of historical memory as part of broader professionalization of the discipline and an increased wave of interest in Texas history. As Cantrell describes it, this new discourse of Texas history moved away from remembrances of the lost cause, resulting in a, "new public view of Texas history that emphasized Texas as both a Western and quintessentially American

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[37] Kelly McMichael. "'Memories Are Short But Monuments Lengthen Remembrances': The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Power of Civil War Memory." *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas.* Ed.Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007. 99. Print.

[38] Ibid. 101, 96-97.

[39] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed. *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000: 14. Print.

state whose identity sprang from the hardy pioneers who tamed the wilderness and defeated the Mexicans in the Texas revolution. It emphasized progress and modernity and marked a turning away from Texas' retrograde southern heritage. "[40]

While the commemorative activities of turn-of-the-century elite white Texan women are now widely documented, no published research project has explored whether or not their peers at the end of the twentieth century have leveraged their historical lineage as memory-makers for similar political purposes. To some extent, new understandings about physiology and psychology make explanations of the "natural" physical aptitude of women as "guardians of history" much less culturally resonant. In addition, women, as well as other marginalized groups, also have many more socially-sanctioned opportunities to express and achieve political power, as well as greater access to the halls of academia where "official" historical narratives are increasingly constructed. As this thesis will demonstrate, however, the TFWR capitalized on the authority and prestige that came from their status as founders of the "Texas Women" exhibit for remarkably similar political purposes. Furthermore, they explicitly acknowledged the historical narratives created by their female predecessors, although they saw themselves as doing something much more revolutionary. [41]

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[40] Gregg Cantrell. "The Bones of Stephen F. Austin: History and Memory in Progressive Era Texas." *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. Ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007. 40-41. Print.

[41] For example, they included information about Clara Driscoll's "second saving" of the Alamo as a historical site in their exhibit and reached out to organizations such as the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in researching Texas women's history.

Structure and Organization of Chapters

In order to create a nuanced picture of the work of the TFWR, this thesis begins by exploring the details of the "Texas Women" exhibit and then moves into a specific analysis of the feminist activism of the TFWR and its regional and national impact. Chapter 1 introduces the TFWR; describes the implementation of the "Texas Women" exhibit; and analyzes the feminist historical counter narrative it produced in direct response to hegemonic narratives of Texan identity during this period of time. Chapter 2 examines the feminism of the TFWR founders and delves into the strategic purposes that the "Texas Women" exhibit served for them. It reconsiders the ways that we assess the effectiveness of historical memory as a technique of feminist activism. The conclusion examines the efforts of the TFWR's historical researchers to create a "Texas Women's History Industry" within the context of the broader women's history movement of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the impact of the TFWR on historical production in the state, and urges a rewriting of our current grand narrative of the "birth" of women's history. It considers the reasons that the study of historical memory can add to our understanding of the nature of second wave feminism and offers suggestions for future research.

Chapter One:
The "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Exhibit: Constructing a Feminist Counter-Narrative of Texan Identity

While the finer details of the story change from source to source, it seems clear that the original impetus behind the "Texas Women" exhibit was budding political player and future state governor Ann Richards's visit to the Institute of Texan Cultures sometime in the 1970s. According to Richards' own autobiographical accounting of the trip, it was actually her young daughter Ellen who spurred her interest in Texas women's history, when she turned to her mother at the ITC and asked her why there was so little information about women in the museum.[42] Regardless of the specifics, Richards was frustrated at her inability to come up with a reasonable answer to these questions. She began to visit libraries and to look at historical materials in order to see how much information about women's history actually existed. [43] She soon realized that there was a profound gap in the historical record on women and decided that something needed to be done about it. Her next step was to lobby her close friends and colleagues in the newly incorporated Texas Foundation for Women's Resources to take this on as one of their first projects. This chapter begins by introducing the work of the TFWR and describing the implementation of the "Texas Women" exhibit. It then reads the exhibit as a feminist counter-narrative of Texan identity in direct response to the work of the ITC. Future

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[42] Ann Richards and Peter Knobler. *Straight for the Heart: My Life in Politics and Other Places*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989: 190. Print. Also, see "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."
[43] Mike Shropshire and Frank Schaefer. *The Thorny Rose of Texas: An Intimate Portrait of Governor Ann Richards.* New York: Birch Lane Press, 1994. Print. "Texas Women's History: Out of the Attics and into the Limelight," Austin: An Official Publication of the Austin Chamber of Commerce, 23:5, May 1981, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

chapters will analyze the broader political and personal motivations of the organization for producing this exhibit, as well as its impact on the organization and the state.

The TFWR was the brainchild of Cathy Bonner, Ann Richards, Jane Hickie, Judith Guthrie, Martha Smiley, and Sarah Weddington, all savvy, self-identified feminist activists who had developed deep personal friendships and strong political ties through their involvement in the Texas Women's Political Caucus; the intensely divisive yet ultimately successful state pro-ERA movement during the early 1970s; and the 1977 International Women's Year conference in Houston—all of which they describe as foundational to their understandings of themselves as feminist activists and their political goals. When asked, the original board members of TFWR stress that they came to a feminist consciousness during their experiences as female university or law students and during the Civil Rights Movement. Most, if not all, of the women were actively involved in what they viewed as feminist activist projects. For example, Cathy Bonner headed the Rape Prevention Control project in Texas and helped found the Women's Crisis Center in Austin, Judith Guthrie volunteered for the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), and Sarah Weddington achieved fame for securing a state legislative seat and successfully arguing Roe v. Wade before the Supreme Court, both in 1972, and accepting the position of White House special assistant on women's issues to President Carter in 1978. All of the original board members of TFWR were white and while many came from working or middle class backgrounds, they had reached a point of economic and political privilege in their own lives. Most had married, many had had families, and several had attended law school.

The feminist political activism of the founders, as well as their privileged political connections, deeply informed the TFWR's work. According to Judith Guthrie, the members of TFWR began talking about founding a non-profit, "frankly to get money that was tax-deductable. We had a lot of rich friends who were very interested in progressive causes and no one to give it to."[44] In 1977, they jumped on the opportunity to take over a 501C3 organization called Womanpower (originally Texas Women's Caucus), which had been founded in 1973 by three San Antonio women named Josephine Hall, Marilyn Cazort, and Janice McCoy, but was now defunct.[45] The early mission of the newly re-christened Foundation for Women's Resources seems to have been fairly fluid. A draft proposal for what was originally called just the "Women's Resource Project" stated that, "The purpose of the WOMEN'S RESOURCE PROJECT [sic] is to create and maintain a central clearinghouse for the appointments of Texas women to state boards, commissions, and administrative jobs. The second purpose is to develop and computerize a master mailing list of possible female appointees and women activists within the state."[46] A more expansive notion of mission is reflected in early publications of the organization, which describe how the TFWR was originally created in order to "provide educational opportunities for, and about, women."[47] The Foundation is still in existence and has spearheaded a variety of successful projects including a program called Leadership

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[44] "Interview with Judith Guthrie, November 10, 2008."

[45] Http://www.womensresources.org/History.asp, 6/24/2008. The Women's Caucus should not be confused with the Texas Women's Political Caucus – they were separate organizations.

[46] "Women's Resource Project Draft Proposal, Memo from Cathy Bonner to Martha Smiley, Jane Hickie, Betsey Wright, and Sarah Weddington, August 22, 1978." Martha Smiley Papers, Box 4, Folder 51, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[47] "Survey Questionnaire and Memo from Mary Beth Rogers, July 1, 1979," Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

Texas, which identifies and develops Texas women leaders. They were also instrumental in creating and securing funding for the first women's museum in the country in 2000, called The Women's Museum, which is located in Dallas, TX. [48]

The members of the Foundation were easily convinced into tackling a state women's history initiative as their second project, despite the sheer enormity of the task. According to Judith Guthrie, "We all thought the history project was grand… We knew that the stories wouldn't be told if we didn't do it…It was an easy "yes" for us."[49] The groups shared the conviction that history provided an important avenue of self-identity. Echoing the belief of the ITC staff that history was avenue to self-understanding, Mary Beth Rogers explained that, "Half of the people in Texas have no history, they have no place to go to find their story…Finding the history of women is important because the past is important to people who look forward. History gives a sense of identity, a sense of oneself as a human being."[50]

Many of the women were also pre-disposed to consider historical narratives personally significant. While few of the women were professional historians, many of them were previously involved in historical projects, had studied history in college, or expressed a longstanding interest in history. Ann Richards had taught social studies for several years after graduating from college. Ellen Temple, who describes history as a lifelong passion, held an undergraduate degree in the discipline from the University of

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[48] See: http://www.womensresources.org/
[49] "Interview with Judith Guthrie, November 10, 2008."
[50] Judith Hillstrom. "Texas History Project Alters Perceptions About Women's Past." *Globe-News*, 1981, The Texas Women: A Celebration of History Exhibit Papers, Box 20, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

Texas at Austin and wrote a women's history column for her local newspapers for several years.[51] Melissa Hield was a graduate student in American studies at the University of Texas at Austin and had already been involved in both the production of a movie—*Talkin' Union*—about Texas women's labor history, as well as the creation of a women's history calendar for the Bicentennial. [52]Although trained as a social worker, Ruthe Winegarten's personal passion was also history. She had completed some graduate work in the field and was particularly known for her interest in African American women's history. Her thesis "I am Annie Mae," an exploration of the life of African American woman Annie Mae Hunt, was both published as a book and later turned into a musical. Katherine "Chula" Reynolds, a member of the TFWR's board who came from the well-known and the influential Texas "King Ranch" family, was interested in finding ways to introduce her illustrious female ancestors, who were highly regarded as business women, into official Texas state narratives.[53] Finally, the 1976 Bicentennial also directly influenced some of the participants' interest in women's history. For example, Frieda Werden, a young poet and radio producer, had worked with Jane Summer, the editor of "Women for Change" newspaper, and Ruthe Winegarten, to produce a series of women's

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[51] "Interview with Ellen Temple, 12/4/08"

[52] "Interview with Melissa Hield, 11/9/08." See also: Linda Anthony. "Film Tribute to Women Workers." *Austin-American Statesman*, October 26, 1978, C1; and Sara Clark and Glenn Scott. "Calendar Spotlights Chicanas." Unclear Publication Title, November 18, 1975, Box 20, "Women in Texas History Calendar" Folder, The Texas Women: A Celebration of History Exhibit Papers, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[53] "Interview with Martha Smiley, 11/11/08."

history radio features called "Sketching Texas Women" which aired on Dallas radio station KERA-FM as part of the 1976 celebrations.[54]

At first, the TFWR believed they could simply convince the Institute of Texan Cultures to change their format and include women in their exhibits. After meeting with the ITC's staff, however, they were told that if they wanted an exhibit about women at the ITC they had to perform the research, create the exhibit, and fund it themselves.[55] Undaunted, their next step was to secure funding for the project so that TFWR could begin researching and mapping out the direction that the exhibit would take. After being turned away by professional historians who felt that an exhibit of this nature was impossible, the TFWR looked within its own social milieu to find staff members. Mary Beth Rogers, who owned her own public relations firm, and Ruthe Winegarten, social worker and graduate student of history—both good friends of the other members of the Foundation through their political activities—were hired as Project Director and Research Director, respectively. The big break for the group came thanks to one of Roger's contacts on the state Committee for the Humanities. After a preliminary, positive conversation with the Executive Director of the Committee, the TFWR submitted a lengthy grant proposal and received a $40,000 matching grant so that they could begin their research. [56]

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[54] Frank Langston. "Dallas '76 Plans, Interest Increase." *Dallas Times Herald*, February 3, 1975: A15. Print.
[55] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."
[56] Ibid. See also: "Grant Application to Texas Committee for the Humanities, January 30, 1979." Box 2.325/G149. Melissa Hield Papers, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

Although excited and enthusiastic, the TFWR women had few concrete models for how to construct a women's history exhibit. While women's history classes and seminars had begun to be offered around the country by this time, it seems that few of the TFWR women, with the exception of the graduate students and Ruthe Winegarten, had had the opportunity even to read academic books on the topic, much less attend classes. [57] There were even fewer opportunities to learn about women's history in museums or archives around the country. According to a 1970s media interview with Mary Beth Rogers, the "Texas Women" exhibit was the first comprehensive state women's history exhibit in the country, although, "Two or three states ha[d] simple photo displays and Atlanta ha[d] a period fashion exhibit."[58] Texans had had the unique opportunity, however, to view at least two other women's history exhibits prior to the TFWR exhibit. The first, a small presentation of Texas women's past and present achievements was housed in the Women's Pavilion at the 1968 HemisFair world's fair. While the TFWR knew about the exhibit thanks to a letter from the San Antonio League of Women Voters—and likely from their conversations with the ITC—there is no evidence that any of the founders or researchers viewed the exhibit while it was installed and little information the types of materials presented. [59]

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[57] There is evidence that Ruthe Winegarten purchased Eleanor Flexnor's book, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* and Gerda Lerner's *The Woman in American History* in August 1979. "Letter from Ruthe Winegarten to Womanbooks, August 3, 1979." Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 20, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[58] Gaylon Fincklea Young. "Exhibit to Tell 'Tall Tales' of Texas Women." *Express-News*, Undated Clipping, Box 2.325/G159, Melissa Hield Papers, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
[59] "Letter from Jerry Ursin, 3/31/80." Box 20, The Texas Woman a Celebration of History Exhibit Papers, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX.

The second, called “Remember the Ladies: Women In America 1750-1815,” was a national women’s history exhibit that visited Texas as part of the official Bicentennial celebrations. Spearheaded by a wealthy Massachusetts women named Muffie Brandon, whose original goal was to preserve the historic Plymouth home of Mercy Otis Warren, “Remember the Ladies,” turned into a highly academic, museum-quality, national presentation of Revolutionary-era American women’s experiences, which brought together an impressive and unlikely coalition of corporate, museum, and feminist supporters—including the National Organization for Women. It is likely that at least some of the TFWR women viewed the exhibit before they began planning “Texas Women,” although none of them mention it as an influence in their recollections. According to Connover Hunt, curator for “Remember the Ladies” and a consultant on “Texas Women,” the TFWR members were highly influenced by the exhibit.[60] It was particularly important to the TFWR that the “Texas Women” exhibit be seen as something unique and revolutionary—they clearly interpret the exhibit this way personally—so it is possible that they have downplayed outside influences in their recollections. It seems likely, however, that the TFWR was influenced by the idea that amateur historians could produce an event of this magnitude, as well as the method of drawing together a bipartisan coalition of corporate, academic, and political sponsors—which involved presenting a political message that was palatable to all involved. They were not, however, interested in replicating the academic tone of the exhibit. While it was important to them that the historical facts they shared with their audience were accurate,

[60] “Interview with Conover Hunt, March 17, 2009.”

they were much more focused on "touching the hearts" of their viewers and inspiring women to participate in the civic life of their state instead of producing a "dissertation" on the lives of women.[61]

This emphasis on creating an emotional, dramatic, multi-media connection that inspired reflection on Texan identity in their viewers was one of several clear influences that came from the Institute of Texan Cultures itself. In 1969, the Texas Pavilion of the San Antonio World's Fair—officially renamed the Institute of Texan Cultures—became a permanent part of The University of Texas at San Antonio through an act of the Texas State Legislature. The Institute was, "charged…with 'providing a statewide educational communication center…relating to the history and culture of the people of Texas." As part of this mission, the Institute produced exhibits, films, slides, tapes, and other educational materials which were widely disseminated to schools and organizations throughout the state.[62] According to promotional brochures, by the early 1970s almost 4 million people had visited the Institute, with about 720,000 viewers coming each year. [63]

Touted as, "the most sophisticated museum in America," the ITC broke new cultural ground by rethinking the ways that it presented its story to its audience and reimagining its relationship to both historical artifacts and the state. [64] For example, the museum did not own its materials, but rather borrowed items from individuals, families,

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[61] "Grant Proposal to Texas Committee for the Humanities." Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
[62] Lively, Frank. *The Many Faces of Texas: The History of the State, Told through its Diverse Peoples, Comes Dramatically to Life in this Unique Museum*. Dallas, TX: Astro Publishing Corp., 197-. :3. Print. While the date on this source is unknown, clues in the text suggests that it was likely published around 1973.
[63]Ibid. 3.
[64] Ibid. 1-2. The quote is attributed to the Museum Director of the National Park Service, whose name is not given in the promotional brochure.

and presumably institutions, for limited periods of time based on its exhibit needs—openly recognizing that its ability to shape cultural narratives was influenced by whether or not it could borrow the necessary artifacts. [65] The ITC also actively imagined itself in dialogue with the citizens of Texas, emphasizing the fact that it was financed by the people of the state, used materials that were owned by its residents, and, perhaps most significantly, represented "all diverse elements of the population … each is given its share of the credit for its contribution as a whole." [66]

In order to achieve a "warm" and "dramatic" emotional connection to their audience, the ITC also relied heavily on new technologies and multimedia exhibits to present their work. According to the director of the museum, who was interviewed for the publicity brochure, "We use sound, color, and movement to appeal to all the senses…We want to create an atmosphere of excitement because people seem to learn better when things are exciting." [67]Perhaps the best example of this was the "spectacular" 60 by 90-foot dome show, which used over four miles of movie film , "292 separate screens and 38 movie and slide projectors [to] produce an audio-image action that surround[ed] the audience." The museum envisioned this show as an effort to, "capsule today's Texans in portraits, their customs in a series of vignettes, and where they live in panoramic sweeps of the countryside, cities, and towns" and emphasized that the story it told was entirely unscripted and authentic.

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[65] Ibid. 1.
[66] Ibid. 2-3.
[67] Frank Lively. *The Many Faces of Texas: The History of the State, Told through its Diverse Peoples, Comes Dramatically to Life in this Unique Museum*. Dallas, TX: Astro Publishing Corp., 197-, 2. Print.

Much like the historical narratives of 1910, which spurred a new and influential definition of Texan identity that was masculine, Western, and "quintessentially American," the ITC shaped a modern historical narrative of Texan identity in the 1970s. [68] This narrative attempted to counteract national discourses that portrayed citizens of the state as bumpkins by "civilizing" the image of "the Texan," while attempting to appease the threat posed by the increasingly urban and multi-cultural population of the state. It did this, however, in part by reinforcing the gendered hierarchies that had always undergirded Texan identity.

As Davis' quote suggests, women's activities were, for the most part, not deemed sufficiently significant to merit inclusion in the ITC's materials. While it is clear from publicity photos that women were represented in some of the ITC's exhibits, the narrative of Texan identity that the museum produced was overwhelmingly masculine--although it reflected a masculinity composed of a variety of different ethnic backgrounds. For example, the Institute's highly publicized dome show, entitled "What is a Texan?" included only two named women from Texas' past, but went to great lengths to reinterpret the definition of Texan identity to include non-Anglo men. [69] Publicity brochures about the exhibits made the definition explicit, asking: "What is a Texan? A tall, blue-eyed, handsome, Anglo-American, strong and silent. Right? Well, perhaps. But he is also a German, a Mexican, a Chinese, an Indian, a Negro. He is all these and many

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[68] Gregg Cantrell. "The Bones of Stephen F. Austin: History and Memory in Progressive Era Texas." *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas.* Ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007. 40-41. Print.

[69] The only two women represented in the pictorial display were Lillie Langtry and Elizabeth Ney. Richards, Ann, and Peter Knobler. *Straight for the Heart: My Life in Politics and Other Places*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989: 190. Print.

more."[70] Media attention to the ITC's exhibits also stressed the ITC's masculine definition of "Texan." For example, journalist Skip Hollandsworth described the impact of the ITC's exhibits on his own interpretation of Texan identity by stating, "…here [in Texas] it is hard to separate oneself from the myths of the tough men of the Alamo and the tough men who conquered the land to raise cattle, and the tough men who found the oil….But a quick tour of the exhibit hall makes one quickly realize the other, neglected myths of Texas—like the black men who heroically fought for Texas' independence from Spain…or the Indians who died fighting for their rights to Texas land."[71] It is clear that both the older and newer definitions of "Texas" left little space for women.

Much like other producers of official histories in the 1970s, there is evidence that the ITC was ultimately unconcerned about the unequal presentations of women in its materials, despite criticism from members of its audience. In a 1977 letter, an unidentified person named M.M. Weiksnar contacted the museum in order to complain about the overt sexism in the Dome Show and suggested that the exhibit should be rewritten in order to remove gendered language that referred to Texans as men. ITC employee David Haynes' official response suggests that they were not only nonplussed by the misogyny apparent in their presentation, but that they had deliberately constructed their narrative this way. He writes, "Your first suggestion is to use "Texans, they" instead of "The Texans, he."…We felt at the time, and still do, that this is much more dramatic than saying, "What are Texans?" When this show was originally in production…we were

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[70] Skip Hollandsworth. "In Rootless Age, Historian Teaches Texans About Heritage." *The Dallas Morning News*, November 4, 1979: 2F. Box 32, Institute of Texan Cultures Folder, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[71] Ibid. 1.

concerned about the implication of using "he" in this context but finally decided that to use the plural form would sound much too awkward and we would loose [sic] a good bit of dramatic impact…I still feel that presenting it as dramatically as possible is the best course. I do not feel that the show is sexist as it is….."[72]

Because the TFWR women wanted the ITC to host their exhibit, they needed to present their historical narrative in a way that fit with the overall message of the museum. They also received training in exhibit design and presentation from ITC staff, which added to the impact of the organization on the TFWR.[73] Finally, the smaller, traveling "Texas Women" "trunk show" or "sampler" exhibits which toured the state after it visited Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and Canyon were inspired by the traveling history exhibits of both the ITC and "Remember the Ladies."

Finally, The TFWR women were also likely influenced by their interactions with Chicana women's rights activists who were increasingly turning to historical narratives as an activist strategy. Martha Cotera, an influential and well-known Texan Chicana feminist, political activist, and writer—who many of the TFWR members knew from her participation in the political organization Las Mujeres de La Raza Unida, and an early researcher on the "Texas Women" exhibit—published a feminist history entitled *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the US* in 1976, when the TFWR was

[72] "Letter from David Haynes to M.M Weiksnar, June 7, 1977." Box. 20, "1977-1978 Correspondence" Folder, The "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Collection, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX. It is unclear how this letter came to be in the possession of the TFWR or what relationship they had with Weiksnar.

[73] "Memo from Mary Beth Rogers to Advisory Committee Members and Project Consultants, August 9, 1979." Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

likely just beginning to focus on their project.[74] As will be demonstrated, Cotera articulates a feminist philosophy of history that sounds remarkably similar to the goals of the TFWR, arguing that, "By understanding the past, Chicana historians hope that contemporary women will be better equipped to cope with the present and determine their future."[75] She describes the ways that Chicano males used, "history, culture, and tradition [to establish] that Mexican American women could/should only be homemakers and mothers" in order to discourage women from taking on leadership roles. [76] According to Cotera, Chicanas responded by, "mov[ing] to shake and destroy all stereotypes held about them, regardless of the source. Women decided that ultimately the hard work they had accomplished in the labor movement, educational reform movement and the Chicano civil rights movement were proof enough that <u>the images held about them were precisely that, images</u>…From the present they moved back to document attitudes and achievements responsible for their strength. The arduous task began with simultaneous historical research as well as contemporary documentation, assuring Chicanas a solid historical base in the future."[77]

Diosa y Hembra , much like the "Texas Women" exhibit, explicitly struggles with the best way to present a historical narrative that presents both the strengths and the challenges of Chicana women's experiences, and identifies a dearth of catalogued resources as a significant impediment to the recording of that history." It is notable that

[74] Martha Cotera. *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U. S.* Austin: Information Systems Development, 1976. Cotera self-identified using the term feminist, although many Chicana women preferred to use other terms to describe their women's rights activism.
[75] Ibid. 8.
[76] Ibid. 8.
[77] Ibid. 9-10.

the book ends with Cotera's musings on what she sees as the unique cultural climate of Austin, where different groups of women seemed, at least to the author, to have had more luck in working collaboratively with each other than in other locales. She expresses hope for future collaborations when she states, "One expected and welcome effect has been that Chicana organizations can form alliances with Anglo women's groups and effectively trade off support for projects to benefit their special interests."[78]

The organizational structure and decision-making process in the first few years of the TFWR also seems to have been highly fluid, decentralized, and marked by a notable degree of consensus. The Foundation worked so well together, according to its members, because they were already friends and because each member of the team supported the others in their interests. As Martha Smiley puts it, "That's how the Foundation's always worked. Whoever had [an] idea had to be willing to take the lead and then everyone else would pitch in and help."[79] The Texas Women's History project, as the exhibit was originally called, pulled together a research staff of approximately fifteen volunteers, composed predominantly of graduate students and amateur historians, but with a few professional historians who acted as advisors in the mix. The women divided into roughly two groups: researchers and fundraisers. While, for the most part, it seems that the different groups of women respected each other and worked well together, there is a faint hint that there were tension between the priorities of the fundraisers—who tended to be interested in developing political careers and cultivating contacts—and the researchers,

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[78] Ibid. 195.
[79] "Interview with Martha Smiley, 11/11/08."

who were most actively engaged in the production of history. In a brief, succinct letter to Project Director Mary Beth Rogers, Research Director Ruthe Winegarten comments, "I must express my extreme disappointment that my name, and those of other staff members, was omitted from the invitation to the LBJ opening. Without us, the exhibit also would not have taken place…May I respectfully request that…[you] include the names of all staff…on the invitation, in press releases, and that the staff be recognized during opening day activities."[80]

The fundraisers, who were predominantly politicians or business women like Cathy Bonner, Jane Hickie, and Ann Richards, raised approximately $350,000-$400,000 by approaching national corporations for money and for crisscrossing the state and country, hosting fundraising parties at the homes of influential women across the political spectrum. [81] As part of this effort, the TFWR invited a group of prominent and influential Texas women—such as African American leader Ada Anderson from Austin and Kay Bailey Hutchison of Dallas—to act as advisory board members for the project. Funders for the project included the Bette Clair McMurray Foundation; the Moody Foundation; the RGK Foundation; Tenneco, Inc.; the Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation; Neiman

[80] "Letter from Ruthe Winegarten to Mary Beth Rogers, February 22, 1982." Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 36, Mss. 20, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[81] Ann Richards and Peter Knobler. *Straight for the Heart: My Life in Politics and Other Places*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989: 191. Print. The fundraisers seem to have focused their efforts on New York, Dallas, Houston, and Austin. See: "Progress Report" from Mary Beth Rogers to Advisory Committee Members, December 17, 1979." The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

Marcus; and the Exxon Foundation.[82] This was a propitious time for corporate-feminist collaborations, as many companies were seeking new ways to modernize and redefine their brands with changing female demographics and the TFWR fundraiser were skilled at capitalizing on the opportunity. [83]

The research team, headed by Winegarten, was composed partially of graduate students in women's history, such as Melissa Hield and the future Dr. Rose Brewer, and enthusiastic amateur volunteers such as Frieda Werden and Sherry Smith (See Appendix B for full list of researchers).[84] The team soon discovered that they needed to begin by writing Texas women's history before they could produce a viable exhibit. Winegarten began the project by methodically searching through card catalogs for information at state libraries and museums in order to find potential exhibit artifacts and to locate compelling historical characters. The research group was also strongly influenced by Andrea Hinding's 1979 *Women's History Sources:* A *Guide to Archives and Manuscript Sources in the United States*—perhaps the first bibliographical resource on archival sources in U. S. women's history, which catalogued women's history resources in the United States.[85]

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[82] Mary Beth Rogers. *Texas Women: A Celebration of History*. Austin: Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1981: 6-7. Print.

[83] Beth Bailey. "She 'Can Bring Home the Bacon': Negotiating Gender in the 1970s." *America in the Seventies*. Ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004. 124-125. Print.

[84] The TFWR were also approached by St. Mary's Hall in Texas with a request to allow their older female students to participate in the history project. The group ended up doing research on the history of women's education in the state. See: "Letter from Joan Mellard, Headmistress of St. Mary's Hall, to Mary Beth Rogers, October 24, 1979" and "Letter from Mary Beth Rogers to Joan Mellard, November 5, 1979." Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 20, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[85] Hinding's *Guide* seems to have been a pivotal catalyst for many popular women's history projects. As stated in the *Northwest Women's Report*, "The most important recent development in the collection of women's history, according to a 1981 *New York Times* article, was the 1980 debut of the 2505-page book

Guided by *Women's History Sources*, the group composed a survey in the same year which they sent to over 4,000 Texas museums, libraries, and individuals, requesting information about historical materials and artifacts. [86]After receiving what they described as an "overwhelming" response, the research team, dividing themselves up thematically, traveled to more than fifty sites across the state to collect information. The TFWR used the results of the survey as the basis for a 300-page *Bibliography*, published in 1980, which included more than 2000 primary and secondary sources on Texas women's history.[87] The exhibit finally opened at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio on Mother's Day 1981, traveled to Dallas in September 1981, the LBJ Library and Museum in Austin in February of 1982, and the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon, TX in summer 1982, with a smaller, more portable "trunk show" or "sampler" version available for loan to social and civic organizations after the final official exhibit. [88] A portion of the original exhibit was also placed on permanent display in the Blagg-Huey

Women's History Sources: A Guide to Archives and Manuscript Collections in the United States…This book "proved what many women's history scholars has suspected or believed—that women's history could be found not just in a few specialized libraries, but in thousands of treasure troves everywhere." **"**Collecting the Sources: Women's History Projects Flourish in the Northwest, " *Northwest Women's Report*, 1:2, March/April 1982, page 1, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G140, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

[86] "TFWR Memo to Advisory Committee, Project Contributors, and Friends from Mary Beth Rogers." Box Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

[87] "Creating a Texas Women's History Industry." Unpublished conference presentation, co-authored by Ruthe Winegarten and Frieda Werden, June 1981. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collections, Box 37a, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[88] "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Exhibit Catalogue, Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1981. The ITC owned and managed the "trunk show" exhibits after they were designed by the TFWR.

Library at Texas Women's University in Denton, TX, where it is still on view today. As of February 1982, more than 500,000 people had viewed the exhibit. [89]

Constructing a Feminist Counter-Narrative of Texan Identity

Unlike the radical feminists of Voichita Nachescu's article who turned to first wave suffragists as their historical role models and to provide legitimacy for their activism, the TFWR reclaimed Texan identity for women by constructing their own feminist narrative of Texas women's history in explicit response to the ITC. The final exhibit—which presented a selection of more than 150 artifacts and pictures from the collection of more than 500 pieces that the researchers amassed, referencing a total of 125 named historical women—focused on eight themes that described the role of women in Texas history: We Fly, We Build, We Love Children, We Act, We Enrich, We Work, We Survive, and We Serve.[90] "Texas Women" turned the ITC's rhetoric of multi-cultural, refined Texan masculinity on its head, powerfully arguing that it was *female* Texans of all races and backgrounds who had both civilized the state and enriched the cultural life of their communities. According to this narrative, the frontier Texans romanticized by the ITC were able to revel in their intellectual and cultural organizations only because Texas women created them.

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[89] "LBJ Library Show Honors Texas Women," February 5, 1982, *The Daily Texan*. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 15, Folder: Clippings - 1982, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX; and Mary Beth Rogers. *Texas Women: A Celebration of History*. Austin: Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1981: 5. Print.

[90] For more information about Lerner's thesis, see: Gerda Lerner. *The Woman in American History*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1971. Print. Barbara Lau. "Texas Women's History: Out of the Attics and Into the Limelight." *Austin Magazine*, May 1981, 23:5: 78. Print.

Upon entering the exhibit, one of the first things that viewers would have seen was the "We Build" display—appearing directly after the introduction to the exhibit, entitled "We Fly"—which argued forcefully that: "Texas women built the community life for hundreds of towns and cities. By creating, enhancing, and preserving institutions, buildings, and traditions, women made life worth living for millions of Texans."[91] The TFWR reinforced this message in their press releases and media interviews, frequently describing Texas women as the "civilizers" of the state and particularly stressing their influence on cultural institutions. [92] Much like other second wave feminist narratives of the late 1970s, the "Texas Women" exhibit also stressed that there were essential feminine qualities such as compassion and nurturing that differentiated Texas women from men. For example, "We Build," went on to describe the ways that, "Texas women builders were different from men. They were more concerned with meeting the need of the people than with bricks and mortar. Women as a whole accepted the responsibility for nurturing and taking care of the helpless, for educating and enriching the lives of their neighbors, or for assisting those who had no resources of their own."[93]

The research staff struggled, at first, to find a theme that tied the different historical narratives and artifacts together into one coherent story. An examination of organizational memos shows that the researchers were originally directed to think about a

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[91] Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Exhibit Catalogue, Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1981, 14.

[92] See, for example: Lee Kelly. "Exhibit Celebrates Contributions of Texas Women." *Austin American Statesman*, February 7, 1982, 2. Print; O'Leary, Tim. "UT Museum Exhibit Honors Achievements of Women," *Daily Texan*, Unclear Date and Page Number. Print. Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[93] Ibid. 14.

truly overwhelming list of questions about Texas women's experiences when they began their hunt, being tasked with "capturing the essence of women's experiences." The project, alternatively entitled both "Texas Women: Lives Worth Living" and "Texas Women: They Made a Difference" in the early stages, focused on three areas: Women in a Man's World, Women in the World of Children, and Women's World. [94]The exhibit theme crystallized into "Texas Women: A Celebration of History," however, after the research staff read the work of perhaps the preeminent women's historian in the country, Gerda Lerner, on the impact of women's community building efforts on history. The TFWR recognizes this influence in the introduction to their exhibit catalogue, stating, "We are indebted to the historian Gerda Lerner, whose discussions of the community building activities of women piqued our curiosity. Lerner's ideas led to our search for evidence that women were history's forgotten builders of local communities. And our findings—presented in this exhibit—verify Lerner's theories that the social history of America's communities will never be fully understood until we understand women's history. In Texas, we have begun to reach that understanding."[95]

Building off of Lerner's thesis, and responding to the emphasis that the ITC placed on building harmony and cohesion within Texas communities, the exhibit catalogue offered an extensive, and pointed, argument about the impact of women's community building. In the preface to the exhibit catalogue, Dr. Beverly Stoeltje, a University of Texas anthropologist and consultant to the project, laid the foundation for

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[94] "Instructions for Field Research Memo," Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX.
[95] Ibid. 4.

this thesis by arguing, “As we view the accomplishments of Texas women…we can begin to comprehend the vast influence women have exerted on the shape of life in Texas. Because women’s accomplishments so often benefit the whole community, they are frequently woven into the social fabric with little public visibility. Yet, if a society wishes to maintain its cohesion and continuity, it must grant recognition and status to those who sustain it. It is, therefore, in the spirit of the women who shaped our Texas heritage that this exhibit acknowledges these creators. ”[96] The exhibit went on to stress the ways that women’s community building efforts both mediated conflict and created the essence of Texan identity that was so powerfully important to the citizens of the state, arguing that, “The concept of ‘community’ includes the idea of people living together and sharing values, experiences, associations, feelings, and interests. A real community has a sense of itself that makes it different from others—that sets it apart. It’s what makes people proud to say, ‘I’m a Dallasite,’ or ‘I’m from Amarillo and I love it.”[97] This theme resurfaces over and over again in the exhibit, and explains some of the framing of the later displays. For example, the section entitled “We Love Children,” focuses on the influence that Texas women had on the future citizens of their communities and “We Build” describes the efforts of earlier Texan women to preserve the history of their community.[98]

From the very beginning of the project, the TFWR was explicit in their desire to construct a historical narrative of Texas women that included women of all races,

[96] Ibid. 10.
[97] Ibid. 14.
[98] Ibid. 24.

background, and classes. In an early memo entitled, "Instructions for Field Research," researchers were directed to, "look at [their] subjects cross-culturally. Determine not only the role of the middle class white woman, but include sufficient information about Chicanas, Black, and Indian women, as well as women from other ethnic groups. However, don't stretch the issue…our total exhibit will reflect a racial and ethnic balance."[99] While one reviewer criticized the "implicit middle class bias" in the exhibit, based on the sources they were able to find, the TFWR actually did a remarkable job telling the stories of women as diverse as the Mexican feminists who founded *escuelitas* in order to supplement the inferior education of Chicano children in the public school system to African American suffragist Christia Adair. [100] They also strove to create a balance between representations of outstanding Texas women, with the nameless rank-and-file women who, they argued, also had an impact on Texas.

While it is likely that the TFWR was influenced by both the ITC and the Texas Committee for the Humanities, which funded the exhibit, the Foundation members are explicit that their focus on a multi-cultural, multi-class historical narrative came from their experiences working within the Civil Rights movement in Texas and from direct personal interaction with female activists of color on shared political projects such as the 1977 International Women's Year Conference in Houston. [101] For example, Martha Smiley emphasized the frequent interactions she had with women of color at political

[99] "Instructions for Field Research Memo," Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX.
[100] Kay Sloan. "The Exhibit On Women Evaluated." Unknown Periodical, May 29, 1981, 20. Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
[101] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008" and "Interview with Martha Smiley, November 11, 2008."

conventions and caucuses and how important this was to her own developing political consciousness. She described, for example, "Lupe [Agiano], down in San Antonio, helping me to understand for the first time what it meant for a woman on welfare to be told that she needs to go to work and what that looks like from her side of it…You know, I grew up in a community that was half Hispanic, poor. But do you think I'd ever thought about it from a quality of life standpoint? Never. So I learned a tremendous amount about the community I came from after I left it through the eyes of these women." As Mary Beth Rogers, Project Director for the exhibit, comments, "We deliberately sought out women of color to be advisors and staff members….We hired Martha [Cotera] who was a Hispanic historian to pull together stories of women in the Hispanic community…Ruthe [Winegarten] herself went digging for African American historians and advisors to work with us and Ruthe herself dug out so many stories of African American women. It would have been real easy to do a nice "white lady, big shot in the community" exhibit, but that's not what we wanted."[102] Martha Smiley seconds this sentiment, saying that, "we were determined to find stories of women who represented the face of Texas historically so we engaged people like Marta Cotera to help us find stories of Hispanic women and we had people like Bertha Means and others here in Austin, African American women who we had worked with…and they helped us uncover the stories of African American women." [103]

[102] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."
[103] "Interview with Martha Smiley, November 11, 2008."

This emphasis on multi-culturalism did not lead, however, to a nuanced exploration of the devastating historical impacts of racism, xenophobia, or sexism on women's lives. Instead, the exhibit retains a positive tone throughout and uses vague, neutral language to hint at the challenges that women of different experiences faced. For example, the issue of slavery merits only one brief, poignant mention in the entire exhibit, in the display entitled, "We Work." Next to a photograph of an African American women spinning, and another holding a white child, and adjacent to an iron with a bell in it that would ring if the slave stopped working, the exhibit describes slavery simply as "women who had to work without pay – under the threat of physical punishment or death…Slavery was a productive and profitable institution for slave owners, but it was particularly devastating for slave women. In addition to house and field work, they were expected to have children to contribute to the wealth of their owners. Rape and attempts at forced breeding were not uncommon." [104] While it would be wrong to suggest that the TFWR was attempting to ignore the ramifications of slavery, it is clear that they preferred to move through the topic as quickly as possible, embedding it within a larger narrative about labor that emphasized women's success as workers.

This emphasis on being inclusive also did not lead to the inclusion of non-heterosexual women's stories in the exhibit—perhaps the most glaring absence in "Texas Women." The TFWR women with whom I spoke were remarkably consistent in describing their reasons for this. While they clearly supported lesbian rights, and were

[104] "Texas Women: A Celebration of History Exhibit." Segment of the original exhibit is on display at the Blagg-Huey Library at Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

explicit about their belief that discrimination against any group was wrong, they felt that homosexuality was a private issue that should remain within the confines of one's personal life. Most of the TFWR also saw lesbian rights as a political distraction from other, more urgent, feminist concerns. As Martha Smiley commented, "Well, we weren't taking on gay rights, I can tell you that. That wasn't happening. [If] you can't get equal pay for equal work in Texas…if you can't get childcare, without it being threatening…Labor was controversial, abortion. I mean you name it, everything on the list was controversial. So you had to take what you thought you could work on …"[105]

Repeatedly throughout the exhibit, the TFWR stressed women's ability to overcome and rise above obstacles. It also emphasized the fact that "Texas Women" was the story of all contemporary Texan women, who were encouraged to leave the exhibit not only identifying with the historical women on display but believing that they too could create cohesion and productive change in their community. Nothing illustrates this better than the frontispiece to the exhibit, entitled "We Are Texas Women," which reads, "Texas Women—A Celebration of History is our story. We build cities, hold jobs, care for children, shape public events, enrich daily lives, serve people, and give life meaning. We have survived hard times and overcome obstacles placed in our paths by laws, public attitudes, the natural environment, and the circumstances of history. And we have triumphed….And today we fly." [106] As part of this positive message, the "Texas Women" exhibit uses both active verbs and direct examples in order to stress initiative of

[105] "Interview with Martha Smiley, 11/11/08."

[106] Mary Beth Rogers. *Texas Women: A Celebration of History*. Austin: Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1981: 11. Print.

Texas women throughout history. Due to the TFWR's special interest in women's role in politics, the exhibit included a particularly extensive section on Texas women's organized political activities in suffrage, temperance, and public office. The narrative cuts off abruptly, however, before approaching any issue of second wave feminism in the state, or any topic that might lead to controversy.

Not surprisingly, the exhibit emphasized the unique qualities of Texan women as compared to other women. The exhibit explicitly strove to complicate the romanticized, stereotypical version of Texan women by pointing out the reality that lay behind the myth. For example, the exhibit catalog describes how, "Texas women, like the state itself, are romanticized in song and legend as brave, beautiful, and strong. Such women can handle a rifle, herd wild cattle and rock the cradle with equal aplomb. A close scrutiny of the historical record reveals that the lives of Texas women have indeed been filled with adventure, much of what appears as romantic today, was, in fact, a necessary response to yesterday's realities." [107] The Texan woman who the TFWR chose to "symbolize the spirit of Texas women," in the introduction to their exhibit and catalogue, aviator and business woman Katherine Stinson, emphasized traditional notions of Texan women's spunk and courage. Their homily to Stinson focuses on her daring and courage that had "worldwide" impact; her persistence in the face of adversity; her self-confidence and fearlessness; her service to country and community; and her impact on the developing aviation industry in the state. [108] Her experience as a pilot also enabled them to tie her

[107] Ibid. Preface.
[108] Ibid. 12-13.

image to the overarching, hopeful metaphor of "We Fly" which undergirds the entire exhibit.

In particular, the historical narrative—as well as TFWR rhetoric— suggested that the hard experience of life on the early Texas frontier had provided Texas women with a strength and endurance that other women lacked. For example, one newspaper article about the "Texas Women" exhibit described the ways that," "Rogers and Richards have become convinced of one thing: Texas women are a breed apart. 'I used to think it was in the water,' Richards says only half-jokingly. Rogers muses: 'I think it has to do with the confidence they developed through hardships. On the frontier they were valued as individuals and really helped their families survive. It helped them develop a spirit of 'can-do' which they passed on. Texas women have a certain adventuresomeness of spirit."[109]

This theme is reinforced in perhaps the most poignant and emotionally stirring portion of the exhibit, the display entitled, "We Survive." This area of the exhibit offers the one moment where the "Texas Women" viewer is allowed to fully experience the loneliness, pain, and frustration that was an integral part of women's lives. The frontier, in effect, becomes a metaphor for the challenges that are masked in other portions of the exhibit, offering a journey of extreme hardship that leads to a transformative experience for the women who lived there. The descriptive text of the display recounts how, "Texas women had to overcome hardship, loneliness, suffering, and scarcity," but argues that

[109] Barbara McIntosh. "History Finally Smiles on Texas Women." Unknown Periodical, Unknown Date. Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149.

they, "managed to survive with spirit and hope intact."[110] While this display may have been emphasized to create drama and emotion, the TFWR members also seem to have been deeply personally impacted by the stories of lonely, hardworking, persevering women on the frontier and frequently repeated stories from the "We Survive" exhibit in both public media interviews and private remembrances.[111]

What is perhaps most significant about this argument is that this belief in Texas women's unique strength was not unusual. For example, in a 1979 *Parade Magazine* article about the unusual number of women leaders in 1970s Austin, "prominent Texas historian," Joe Franz, responded to the question, "Why should Austin…be a place where women have won so much of the power usually held by men?," by commenting, "Why not? It's part of the Western feeling that everyone should carry their own weight. In frontier days, an extra hand was an extra hand, regardless of sex."[112] A female reporter, writing for *Texas Monthly Magazine* in the 1970s, not only echoed this spirit, but explicitly related what she viewed as the dearth of feminist activism in Texas to the hardiness of women on the frontier, stating, "I was of the opinion that the reason the feminist movement didn't sweep Texas like a storm in its early days is because it concerned itself with certain things that many Texas women had taken care of a long time ago. Maybe it's our frontier heritage; after all, it was the frontier states that first granted

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[110] Mary Beth Rogers. *Texas Women: A Celebration of History*. Austin: Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1981: 64. Print.

[111] The "crazy jug" artifact, which a frontier mother created out of mementos after her baby's death, is a particular favorite.

[112] Marguerite Michaels. "Women Power is Deep in the Heart of Texas." *Parade Magazine*. March 5, 1978: page numbers unclear, Ann W. Richards Papers, Box 95-263/T3, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

women suffrage in this country…Maybe our great-grandmothers were just too important to everyone's survival to take much put down from their men. All I knew is that growing up in Texas it never once occurred to me to think of myself as inferior to men…."[113] In the next chapter, I will argue that the TFWR carefully constructed an image of Texas women that would resonate with a wide variety of Texans, at the same time that it avoided controversy. In order to understand the reasons for this effort, we must now consider the deeper motivations that the TFWR had for spearheading this exhibit.

[113] Prudence Mackintosh. "The Good Old Girls." *Texas Monthly*, January 1978: 89. Print.

Chapter Two:
Growing Roots and Branches: Empowering Texas Female Political Activism Through a Celebration of Women's History

At the February 1982 San Antonio opening of "Texas Women," Project Director Mary Beth Rogers gave a speech celebrating the "capital woman." She defined the phrase for her audience in the following way:

> What is it about these capital women? … The capital woman knows what is important. She figures out what can be done and how to do it. She sticks her neck out to get it done. Most of all, she knows who she is and has the courage to say 'I am who I am…I do what I must.' So it is this sense of self—as well as bravery, intelligence, daring, hard work, wisdom, and love that characterizes the capital woman…the women *in this room* [emphasis mine] who make things happen in this city, in this state, in this nation.[114]

Furthermore, the capital woman was not only a proactive, "take charge" kind of woman, but she was an explicitly political creature. According to Rogers, this was because, "Austin is one of the great centers of politics in this country, the capital woman most often makes things happen politically…"[115]

While Rogers is describing the historical figures that form the basis of the "Texas Women" exhibit, she is also openly referring to her colleagues and friends who brought the project to fruition. As this quote suggests, the TFWR women both identified

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[114] "Saluting Texas Women" Speech by Mary Beth Rogers, page 2, Box 20, "San Antonio Opening—Originals of Press Release, Speeches" Folder, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[115] Ibid. 2.

personally with the historical narrative that they constructed and also used it for strategic, political purposes. I will argue in this chapter that the "Texas Women" exhibit was a uniquely effective and culturally palatable method of feminist activism within the context of the late 1970s/early 1980s that far exceeded the goals the organization set for it. Building off of Texas womens' longstanding cultural authority as memory-makers, as well as contemporary discourses that privileged the importance of history, the TFWR brilliantly created their own powerful political narrative that that enabled them to express their feminist values in a region of the country that was hostile to feminism. In particular, they capitalized on the ITC's assertion that historical memory was the root of both self-identity and cultural harmony—and used a variety of rhetorical and performative techniques— in order to justify their own feminist values to themselves and others; urge cohesion between multiple groups of women, as well as women and men; and to achieve their goal of actively encouraging women to participate in the civic life of their community.

The "Texas Women" exhibit also gives us the opportunity to rethink the way that we imagine historical memory as a tool of feminist activism. Most scholarly analyses of women's "memory-making projects" suggest that the tangible power achieved through these efforts is "diffuse," and ultimately fairly ineffective. [116] While it is true that the TFWR's narrative was mediated by their need to make it acceptable to both the ITC and the broader public, as well as the constraints placed on them by access to artifacts; they

[116] Kelly McMichael. "'Memories Are Short But Monuments Lengthen Remembrances': The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Power of Civil War Memory." *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*. Ed. Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007. 97. Print.

were actively able to leverage the publicity and connections they developed through the exhibit to serve both their political and personal goals. I would also like to suggest that we must read the "Texas Women" exhibit as part of a long lineage of feminist political spectacles that have encouraged not only an outward recognition of women's political citizenship, but that have also created opportunities for embodied feminist experiences. Based on recent research that highlights the importance of embodied experiences in the development of feminist identities, as well as an analysis of viewer's responses to the exhibit, it would seem that the "Texas Women" exhibit was an important opportunity for Texans to achieve to a form of feminist consciousness.

Setting the Stage: The TFWR, Texan Womanhood, and Regional Feminist Identity

Many of the TFWR women paint a picture of Texas in the 1970s and '80s as a particularly complicated place to be a feminist.[117] For example, they describe how culturally uncomfortable Texas women were with political protest. Martha Smiley, who tirelessly recruited women as political activists in her role as the Chair of the Texas Women's Political Caucus, recalls that, "Texas women were not really activists…They didn't like it [discrimination] and they were angry, some of them, but they weren't going to march in the streets….So if I think back to where was the challenging dialogue, it

[117] Because I had the opportunity to interview more of the "fundraisers" than the "researchers" it is possible that this is generally more representative of that group, which tended to be a little older, have more economic resources, and be more involved directly in legislative politics. I currently have no evidence based upon my reading of the archival record that supports this, but to be cautious, I would say that future research would need to be done in order to examine finer nuances in the group.

wasn't happening in Texas. Except to the extent that we were able to create it." [118] Judith Guthrie, a lawyer and future judge, also commented on the fact that feminists in Texas were "nice southern ladies" who "work[ed] slowly, correctly, [and] politely" but that they could only "[take] it as far as they could go being nice."[119]

The TFWR women also emphasize how important it was for Texas feminists to negotiate regional cultural standards of womanhood, feminine beauty, and appearance in order to achieve their political goals. It may at first seem both frivolous and stereotypical to focus on the appearances of Texan feminists during this period of time. On the contrary, the TFWR make it abundantly clear in their interviews and in the archival sources that they understood their self-presentation as a powerful factor in the success of failure of their efforts and they treated in very seriously indeed. The pressure to maintain a highly feminized appearance was particularly intense in Texas during this period of time. A 1978 *New York Times* article by Anna Quindlen—entitled "To Be Plain in Texas is a Fate Worse Than Death," after a direct quote from one of her sources—makes this abysmally clear. Quindlen describes "the phenomenon of the Texas woman, making her mark all over the United States with a combination of warmth, good humor, good grooming and ambition that is unmistakable Lone Star quality." What is perhaps most interesting about "the Texan beauty" described in this article was the fact that her charm was not merely physical—the result of good genes and luck—but was based on, "hard work" built upon a foundation of "dancing lessons, and piano lessons, and school and

[118] "Interview with Martha Smiley, November 11, 2008."
[119] "Interview with Judith Guthrie. November 10, 2008."

church and sororities" which upheld a certain type of wholesome traditional femininity at the same time that it masked a particularly savvy and intelligent female mind. As Quindlen slyly notes, "Some say Texas is a place where the southern belle meets the pioneer woman, making a mix of the soft and steely. The more cynical say that the savvy Texas women hide a double-edged mind behind a wide smile, and use both to their own advantage.[120]

The article may have been on to something, as it accurately describes the thoughtfully strategic cultivation of a traditional feminine appearance utilized by the TFWR. For example, in a 1978 quote, Jane Hickie, described her evolution in thinking about the relationship between clothing and successful feminist activism: "In the earlier days, it was a big deal that you DIDN'T [sic] dress up. I don't know why, except that it was a lot more comfortable…But at some point, I guess about three years ago, somebody noticed that nobody listened if they were looking at your dirty feet. I guess the return of dresses indicates a greater degree of political sophistication. We don't want to just be right any more. We want to win."[121] And as Mary Beth Rogers points out, "Our goal was to be effective and raise the money…we had to look like everybody else…we did not want to fit the stereotype of the angry, strident feminist." [122] While there were clear political reasons for dressing in particular ways, it was also personally important to the TFWR women to dress in a way that made them feel confident, proud, womanly, and Texan.

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[120] Anna Quindlen. "'To Be Plain in Texas is a Fate Worse Than Death.'" *The New York Times*, February 24, 1978, A18. Print.
[121] Prudence Mackintosh. "The Good Old Girls." *Texas Monthly*, January 1978: 92. Print.
[122] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."

There is a strong thread of anxiety about the relationship between femininity, female identity, and organized feminism in the words and the actions of the TFWR women. In part, this stemmed from a desire for role models who could help them reconcile the desire for a contemporary feminist lifestyle with a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a Texan woman. For some, this anxiety materialized as a sense of rootlessness. Ann Richards was quoted in a media interview for the exhibit as saying, "I don't want any more of our daughters to feel like I felt most of my life—that I don't know what my roots are, that I don't know from what I have sprung."[123] Others described a need to sort through all of the confusing and conflicting demands of womanhood in order to find the essence of what it meant to be female. For example, Mary Beth Rogers speaks of an intense desire to understand what it meant to be a woman during this particular period of time when women's roles were rapidly shifting. She emphasizes the fact that, "There was this hunger, this sense of "I want to know what is central to the female identity." [124] While other Americans in the 1970s "sought spiritual solace, moral certainty, or new avenues to self-fulfillment" through self-help books, new age spirituality, or fundamentalist Christianity, the TFWR women turned to the inspiring historical narrative they constructed as a framework that explained their success and their activities to both themselves and their audience.[125] Rather than simply being a rhetorical tool to justify the need for a women's history exhibit to the public, the TFWR members

[123] Barbara McIntosh, "History Finally Smiles on Texas Women." *Pest*, date unclear. Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
[124] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."
[125] Beth Bailey and David Farber. "Introduction." *America in the Seventies*. Ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004. 6-7. Print.

talked with each other about the ways that women's history helped them understand each other. For example, a 1980 letter from Mary Beth Rogers to Liz Carpenter, commented, "I've just read your wonderful reminiscences about the women in your family. Now I know what makes Liz Carpenter run."[126]

This anxiety may have been particularly acute for the older, more well-to-do women in the TFWR such as Ann Richards, Martha Smiley, Sarah Weddington, and Jane Hickie, who were actively involved in legislative politics and who seemed to have straddled a generational divide in Texan feminist activists. Judith Guthrie fondly recalled Hermine Tobolowsky—a powerfully influential Texan women's rights activist during the 1950s and 1960s who played a crucial role in the state ERA fight— as a role model and described the way that she would, "[come] to the capitol in gloves and a hat."[127] Martha Smiley recalls, however, how just a few years later things had changed a great deal. "In my third year of law school—there were so few women—we could all fit in the ladies lounge….[and] we were still wearing pantyhose and skirts. But the entering class, they weren't having any of that. They came storming in, they were feminists, they organized a caucus…they invited us to come and we were like what is this?"[128] These differences would have been exacerbated by the fact that so many of the older TFWR women's white, upper middle class, socioeconomic peers were actively involved in anti-ERA groups such as Women Who Want to Be Women (also known as "the Pink Ladies," due to the hyper-feminized outfits that they wore to lobby their representatives) as well as a

[126] "Letter, Mary Beth Rogers to Liz Carpenter, January 15, 1980." "January 1980" Folder, Texas Women: A Celebration of History Papers, Box 20, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[127] "Interview with Judith Guthrie, 11/10/08."
[128] "Interview with Martha Smiley, 11/11/08."

new fundamentalist movements such as the "Fascinating Women" and "Eve Reborn" that encouraged the return to a "traditional" family life based on womanly submission, that were based out of Texas and sweeping the nation at the time.[129] Both media articles and academic studies conducted on the "Pink Ladies" in the 1970s stressed the similarities in background and values between the predominantly white, well-to-do women, in Texas who voted both for and against the ERA. The strongest differences between the groups seems to have been that the anti-ERA women may have come from slightly more rural backgrounds, been more motivated by religious faith in becoming politically active, and were less likely to work outside the home.[130] Multiple members of the TFWR expressed their particular anger at the "Pink Ladies," both because of the "ludicrousness" of their political ideology, but also seemingly in part because of the way they blatantly reappropriated tropes of southern womanhood such as cake baking, gloves, and pink dresses for their political purposes.[131]

At least some of the TFWR women also struggled to overcome their image as traditionally "southern" women in order to be taken seriously by what they viewed as an elitist, northeastern, organized feminist movement. In an interview for the online magazine *Salon.com* in 2000, Cathy Bonner and Ann Richards addressed questions about feminism and took pains to express their differences with the broader feminist movement,

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[129] See, for example: Gregory Curtis, "Retreat from Liberation." *Texas Monthly*, June 1975: 58-63, 88-94. Print.; Virginia Lee Warren. "In This Day of Liberation, They Study How to Please Their Men." *The New York Times*, June 28, 1975: 14. Print.; and Joyce Maynard. "The Liberation of Total Woman." *The New York Times*, September 28, 1975: 233.Print.

[130] David W. Brady and Kent L. Tedin. "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement." *Social Science Quarterly,* 56: 4, March 1976, 564-565. Print.

[131] "Interview with Judith Guthrie, 11/10/08" and "Interview with Martha Smiley, 11/11/08."

in the process defining what they seem to have seen as a distinctly regional feminism.[132] The interviewer, Aaron Gell, writes that, "From the beginning, the seven Texas women who formed the group [Foundation for Women's Resources]…found themselves philosophically opposed to their more radical feminist cohorts in the Northeast." According to Cathy Bonner, there were regional antagonisms that got in the way of relationships with the "movement establishment," stating that, "They always thought we were slow-talking dimwits." Ann Richards used humor to illustrate her belief that, "Because we were Texans, we did things our way…You remember the famous burning of the bras that was going on in the Northeast? We didn't do that type of thing 'cause we all needed our bras." She also articulated what she saw as a distinctly different political strategy. 'We were much more politics-oriented than demonstration-oriented, 'Richards continues. 'Our goal was to change laws and change policy. Not in the sense of protest, but to figure out how we could get a piece.'"

The TFWR's strategic differences with the national feminized movement were exacerbated by the images of southern women and southern feminists that prevailed in national media. Southern women were almost invariably portrayed as belles with soft voices and quiet demeanors, who resisted the rising tide of feminist activism.[133] While it is problematic and not entirely accurate to represent Texan women as southerners, the reality was that they faced ridicule and discrimination based on the fact that they were

[132] Aaron Gell. "If You Can't Say Anything Nice...The Nation's First Women's Museum Dodges Controversy--and Whole Chunks of History." *Salon.com*. Retrieved March 1, 2008, from http://archive.salon.com/mwt/feature/2000/11/27/museum/print.html

[133] See, for example, Sally Quinn. "Peach Frost and Soft Talk of the President's Secretary." *The Washington Post*, November 6, 1977: F1.

often *stereotyped* as southerners. Reed's article, quoted above, went out of his way to characterize southern women as virulently anti-feminist, despite the fact that his evidence actually seems to support a notion that southern women expressed their feminism differently. He writes, "The Southern Belle [sic] still lives on and seems determined to resist the nation's offer to liberate her. While her sisters in the North raise their consciousness, the Southern [sic] woman irons her husband's shirts…and if she thinks about it all, denounces the Equal Rights Amendment as the work of Satan." Media articles also increasingly—and gleefully— pitted northeastern liberal establishment feminists such as Bella Abzug, the former special counsel to the president on women's affairs, against southern women such as TFWR member Sarah Weddington, who was hired to replace Abzug by the president. These women are invariably described in terms of their physical appearance—Abzug's "floppy hats and dowdy figure and loud voice" compared to the "soft-spoken" Weddington, who "look[ed] like a lady…[with] flawless skin—which is meant to suggest their political style.[134] Most of these articles openly hinted at movement feminists disdain for Weddington's accommodating political style and questioned whether or not her "soft-spoken" demeanor might be no match for the women's movement or the White House.[135]

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[134] Susan Wood. "The Weddington Way." *The Washington Post Magazine*, February 11, 1979: 6. Print.
[135] See also: Abby Kaighin. "Diplomacy' Called Plus for Weddington." *Austin-American Statesman*, September 1, 1978, Unclear Page Numbers; Brenda Bell. "It's Official: Weddington Appointed." *Austin-American Statesman*, Unclear Date and Page Numbers; Vera Glaser. "Weddington's New Challenge." *Austin-American Statesman*, October 8, 1978, Unclear Page Numbers. All from the Martha Smiley Papers, Box 2, Folder 21: ERA-Newspaper Clippings Part I, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX.

Rather than being simply personal tensions between the specific TFWR women and the movement feminists they met, these differing regional styles and tensions were widely reported on by the media in the 1970s. For example, in a 1978 *Texas Monthly* article about the National Women's Conference in Houston, Prudence Mackintosh described what she saw as the difference in both manner and substance between Northeastern "movement" feminists and Texan feminists, which lead to "East/West cultural differences in [the] exchange of power..."[136] Much of tension seems to have stemmed from fundamental disagreements about the way women should present themselves and the ways they attempted to achieve feminist change. For example, Mackintosh quotes the frustration of conference decorator Ann Britts in dealing with Northeastern feminists who did things very differently from the Texans as saying: "Some of these women I'm dealin' with don't have no more sense than a waltzin' pissant. In Texas, we grew up knowing that if you really wanna get somethin' done, you first ask politely and you communicate just as clearly you know what you want." Mackintosh also quoted "special conference consultant" Helen Cassidy, who suggested that Northeastern women generally misinterpreted Texan women's demeanor as a lack of grit and intelligence, often based upon stereotypical assumptions about their passivity. She scoffs, "The New York women wanted to pride themselves on being the roughest, toughest, most outspoken women on the earth, but I assured them although we might be quiet-spoken and polite, we could be vicious when crossed."

[136] Prudence Mackintosh. "The Good Old Girls." *Texas Monthly*, January 1978: 89. Print.

Britts not only stressed the different cultural expectations between the two groups, but argued that Texan women's style was more effective at getting things done. "I'll tell you, I've never had a bit of trouble with my guys [her staff]… I work with the guys who think we ought to be barefoot and pregnant, but they respect me…Lookin' nice is part of it I guess. My mama raised me to care what I look like." Mackintosh reinforced this sentiment, offering her own personal opinion that, "It seemed to me that the Texas women who had never lost the ability to communicate with the good old boys … would deserve a lot of the credit for bringing off this conference. She also suggested that she hoped the event would serve to "in a psychological sense…Texaniz[e] the women's movement." [137]

At the same time that the TFWR struggled with all of the conflicted meanings of feminist identity in their region, they frequently, and not surprisingly, pointed to their Texas upbringing and heritage as a source of deep strength and pride. For example, it is striking how many of the TFWR women that interviewed, commented on what they saw as their parents' uniquely Texan belief that they could and should do anything that they wanted to do, despite the fact that they were women—which they saw as important to their future success as leaders. For example, Martha Smiley comments, "My parents wanted me to do whatever I wanted to do and they were going to encourage and support me…my father taught me to pitch, taught me to shoot..whatever I wanted."[138] They also clearly reveled in the strength and tenacity of the vision of Texan female identity that

[137] Ibid. 92.
[138] "Interview with Martha Smiley, 11/11/08."

they constructed in the “Texas Women” exhibit and drew sustenance from the story it told. Finally, they took great pride in their accomplishments and in the lasting bonds they built over the course of their work together. The final section of this chapter will analyze the impact that the “Texas Women” exhibit had on both the TFWR women and their political successes.

Assessing the Strategies and Techniques of TFWR Feminist Activism

I. Feminist Goals

The TFWR focused their activism on historical narratives because it was most suited to their personal value systems as Texan feminists and was most palatable to their audience. The feminist goals of the group may not have been immediately obvious to their viewers, because the TFWR went out of their way to stress the non-political purposes of the women’s history project when they spoke about it publicly, avoiding the use of the term “feminist” because of what they viewed as its increasingly strident connotations. For example, in a media interview for the exhibit, researcher Janelle Scott asserted that the exhibit was, “apolitical—it’s not an angry approach, it’s a thoughtful approach.” [139] According to Martha Smiley, this strategy was, “practical, you know?…The stories that you wanted to tell, what you wanted to do with that, was totally non-partisan.” [140] They also emphasized the long-standing tradition of Texan women as memory-makers, pointing out, for example, “There is a tradition of preserving what is valuable in our heritage. Clara Driscoll and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas saved

[139] Ibid.
[140] “Interview with Martha Smiley, November 11, 2008.”

the Alamo. Other Texas women in hundreds of local communities preserve historical buildings and records for future generations. Women serve as the unofficial guardians of Texas history."[141]

Nevertheless, both organizational memos from the 1970s and current oral histories with members of the TFWR, make the project's feminist goals unmistakable. In a 1979 working conceptual draft of the project, the members of the Foundation specify both their intended audience and their political goals for the exhibit. In general, they hoped to attract a varied audience made up of men and women of all political persuasions because, "We want to gain a change in a prevailing attitude that the things men do have high status, and the things women do have low status. We want this general audience to walk away from the exhibit knowing (and feeling) that Texas women have done significant, exciting, and remarkable things…From this realization, we want them to explore for themselves "why" they've never heard about Texas women, and thus to understand how pervasive and illogical discrimination has been."[142] Out of this large, general group, they strove to reach two particular groups – what they term "average" women and young girls—for specific reasons. According to their draft, they hoped to, "… make [average] women feel good about themselves, by knowing that the traditional and non-traditional activities of women have significance," and they also wanted,

[141] Mary Beth Rogers. "Women in Texas History and Legend." Texas Women: A Celebration of History Papers, Box 32, "History News" Folder, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[142] "Women in Texas History Exhibit Concept Working Draft, circa 1979." 2. Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/ G149, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

"…young girls to know that roles models exist…and that they have option for their futures that most women in Texas history did not have."[143]

According to both Judith Guthrie and Martha Smiley, an additional motivation for the exhibit was a desire to reach outside of the political realm in which many of them actively participated in order to encourage "average" women to become actively involved in the public life of the state, either by running for office or taking leadership roles in business or community activities. This was because they felt strongly that equality would only be achieved if more women became knowledgeable about structural inequalities built into the legal and social system and then participated as leaders in processes that could change those systems. This couldn't happen, however, without, "some education among the populations and leaders about the fact that there was a serious contingent of people whose talents were being wasted."[144] The strong Texan women that populated the history exhibit were intended to act as role models, who would inspire, justify, and educate future female activists in the state.

Other sources suggest that at least some of the TFWR women intended for there to be direct political consequences derived from the exhibit. For example, Liz Carpenter, a nationally known ERA activist who was invited to emcee the opening in Austin with Ann Richards, and who worked closely with the members of the TFWR as part of the Texas Women's Political Caucus, was quoted as saying, "I just wish there was such an exhibit in states that have not yet ratified (the ERA)…I think that it shows how ridiculous

[143] Ibid. 2.
[144] "Interview with Judith Guthrie, November 10, 2008."

it is that there's anyone in the world who thinks (women) don't belong in the Constitution."[145] Organizational records also suggest that there were ongoing conversations about the potential political impact of the exhibit. In a 1980 advisory committee meeting, TFWR members Cathy Bonner not only suggested that the exhibit should be leveraged to encourage the ITC to hire more female staff members, but also to support the formation of a statewide Texas women's network.[146]

A speech presented by Ruthe Winegarten and Frieda Werden at the June 1981 Berkshire Women's History conference also stressed that the TFWR viewed, "build[ing] bridges in the community of women among traditionalists and feminists [and] apply[ing] the lessons of previous struggles in Texas women's history to the ongoing political process," as "long-range" goals of the project. [147] Exhibit components and speeches delivered in conjunction with the exhibit explicitly called for women of difference perspectives and backgrounds to unite around their common Texan heritage. For example, in a pre-recorded audio clip that played at the openings, ERA activist Liz Carpenter ended the entire piece with a direct plea for harmony, saying, "I have a lot of faith in the women of this country. Let's remember not to shortchange each other—women are human after all. We don't have to approve of each other 100 percent on all

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[145] "LBJ Library Show Honors Texas Women," February 5, 1982, *The Daily Texan*. Unclear page numbers. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 15, Folder: Clippings - 1982, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[146] "Advisory Committee Minutes, June 14, 1980." Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 37a, Advisory Committee Minutes Folder, The Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX.

[147] "Creating a Texas Women's History Industry." Unpublished conference presentation, co-authored by Ruthe Winegarten and Frieda Werden, June 1981. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collections, Box 37a, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

issues—70 percent will do it. You know, if all the varied assorted people in the American Revolution had waited to like each other, we'd still be at Bunker Hill."[148] While it is possible that this was a strategy intended simply to nurture a lack of controversy at the exhibit—and likely even an influence of the Bicentennial and ITC historical discourses—it seems unlikely to me that there is not a deeper political significance.

While most of the TFWR women I interviewed did not mention coalition-building as a key reason for the exhibit, it is difficult based on both the historical context and direct archival evidence not to read this, even unintentionally, as such. During the late 1970s, battles between different feminist factions heated up, while a growing national backlash against women's rights activism took hold on the nation. When remembering this particular period of time, Martha Smiley, recalls how the "dialogue was mean and hateful." [149] A peer of the TFWR women, Margaret Baillargeon, Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women in Dallas, described in 1979 how, "All indications are that there is no clear consensus, and that this is the time for women to come together and reach a meeting of the minds on some of their major differences…I do not have much hope that compromise will take place…Women in Dallas, Texas, like most women throughout the United States, seem to be unable to listen to one another."[150]

Several of the TFWR members, including Martha Smiley, Ann Richards, Cathy Bonner, Jane Hickie, and Melissa Hield, had also participated in pro-ERA activism and

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[148] "Draft of Dome Show Soundtrack, 4/1/81." Box 26, The Texas Women: A Celebration of History Collection, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[149] "Interview with Martha Smiley, 11/11/08."

[150] "Some Observations on the State of the Women's Movement." Unclear Publication Title, July 12, 1979. Martha Smiley Papers, Box 2, Folder 17: ERA-Publications, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

attended the 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston, experiencing both bruising battles between women and intensive efforts to achieve consensus firsthand. In particular, Smiley, in her leadership role at TWPC, was actively involved in forming the National Women's Agenda Coalition with the Women's Action Alliance in 1976 and in marshalling women around the "Pro-Plan Caucus."[151] The TWPC was also working in coalition with the League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, Women in Communications, Texas Business and Professional Women, the Women's Equity Action League, NOW, as well as the San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, and Fort Worth Commissions on the Status of Women, in order to work "together on issues in addition to the Equal Rights Amendment."[152] Those members of the TFWR who were involved in the TWPC also likely remembered discord between their group and the Chicana feminist group, Mujeres Por La Raza Unida, when an attempted political coalition fell apart. [153]

To some extent, the Foundation seems to have been successful at reaching beyond boundaries and drawing together a large coalition of viewers and supporters to the exhibit. As one journalist commented after viewing the opening and exhibit, **"**Most intriguingly, [the exhibit] has been done in a fashion that brought together for the opening

[151] "Meeting of Texas Women's Organizations Minutes, October 10, 1976." Martha Smiley Papers, Box 3, Folder 31, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[152] "Memo from Betty Anderson, Gertrude Barnstone, and Martha Smiley to Other Feminist Organizations, February 19, 1976." Box 4, Folder 47, Martha Smiley Papers, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[153] According to the *Handbook of Texas Online*, Mujeres Por La Raza Unida had, "obtained the Texas Women's Political Caucus endorsement of Alma Canales, a Raza Unida Party candidate for lieutenant governor in 1972, but the TWPC failed to work for Canales's campaign. Consequently, at the December 29, 1973, Raza Unida convention, Mujeres voted unanimously to withdraw from the Texas Women's Political Caucus. And in solidarity with Chicanas in New Mexico, they also withdrew from the National Women's Political Caucus." See: http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/MM/vimgh.html.

ceremonies radical feminists, liberal politicians, and conservative historians. That, in itself, is a significant victory."[154] As discussed previously, the TFWR took pains to represent women of many backgrounds across the political spectrum as part of this effort. Equally as noticeable, however, was the obvious effort that they took to cultivate men's approval of the project. For example, Rogers' "Capital Women" speech included an entire paragraph where she saluted the extraordinary "capital men" who loved their "capital women" for their being themselves. She comments, "In saluting these capital women, we also recognize capital men. We know that it takes courage to love a brave women…intelligence to love a brilliant woman…wisdom to love a wise woman…and heart to love a loving woman. Tonight we also salute the husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, lovers, and friends of the capital woman…and all of you, the capital audience."[155] They also looked for ways to include sources produced by men in the historical narrative that they wrote. In the "Instructions for Field Research" memo, the researchers were encouraged to, "look for quotations by men and women which will make your points for you." [156] Finally, they were careful to publicly articulate the reasons that men should pay attention to the narrative produced by the exhibit. As Mary Beth Rogers suggested in a media interview, "Knowing women's history can help us understand ourselves, and help men understand us, as women…Why should men care? Because they want their daughters to have opportunities that women haven't had

[154] Kay Sloan. "The Exhibit on Women Evaluated," *The Texas Observer*, May 29, 1981, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
[155] Ibid. 2-3.
[156] "Instructions for Field Research" Memo, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G149, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

before."[157] The TFWR was particularly proud of the fact that they completed their project without creating any kind of controversy. As Mary Beth Rogers commented gleefully to a reporter, "…we've not received any, negative, reaction [emphasizing each word]. We've raised a lot of our money from men who want their daughters to have the kind of role models the exhibit will provide."[158]

Women of color also responded to the exhibit in a positive manner. Many of the women who were included in the exhibit itself were excited about the project and pleased with the way that they were represented. For example, African American civil rights activist and suffragist Christia Adair appreciated that way that the exhibit concretely demonstrated how women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds could work together to achieve positive change. She writes, "I wish I knew how to say "thanks" in a great big way to all the beautiful women who worked so hard to tell the people of the world that after all there are some values in the interest and concern of women; and that all of us from all walks of life and service and directions can work together on projects which demonstrate understanding and sympathetic ambitions which make a united effort…[and] which gave us the privilege to participate and feel a part of same. It was such a grand and happy experience." Hispanic labor activist and pecan worker Emma Tenayuca, shared a similar sentiment, suggesting that the exhibit broke down barriers against women. She writes, "Would you kindly extend my personal greetings to Mrs. Richards and my thanks

[157] Judith Hillstrom. "Texas History Project Alters Perceptions about Women's Past." *Globe-News*, 1981, "Clippings 1/1/81-5/3/81" Folder, Box 20, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[158] Barbara Lau. "Texas Women's History—Out of the Attic and Into the Limelight." *Austin Magazine*, 23:5, May 1981, 83, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

for including me in this Exhibit, the first of its kind in the history of our State…and who by so doing set a tone, or policy…that women who have or will espouse unpopular causes will be honored."[159] While we need to take into account the fact that these comments were collected by the Foundation in order to share them with funders and press, there is nothing to indicate that the impressions of these women were misrepresented.

At the same time, attempts on the part of the TFWR to create cohesion with other feminists groups were not as fully realized as they might have been. Rather than working to create deep alliances with women of color, for example, the organization prioritized inclusiveness in their exhibit narrative rather that in the makeup of the foundation itself. To their credit, the TFWR women were and are candid about these struggles to navigate changing meanings of race, class, and gender. For example, while reminiscing about her experiences as a floor leader who was attempting to create a consensus around the national women's agenda in the 1977 Houston conference, Martha Smiley commented on the fact that, "It was very, very difficult to work through issues with Hispanic women. It was very difficult to work through issues with some of the African American women because they were working through discrimination on several levels and frankly the white women who were in this were pretty privileged." [160] There is also archival evidence that the TFWR women actively debated the meaning of the racial makeup of their organization. For example, Melissa Hield, a graduate student who did research and

[159] Miscellaneous "Comments on Exhibit" collected by the Foundation for Women's Resources, undated materials. Box 38, Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[160] "Interview with Martha Smiley, November 11, 2008."

administrative tasks for the Foundation, wrote in the rough draft of an organizational self-evaluation for one of the exhibit's primary funders, The Texas Committee for the Humanities, that, "We also feel that the absence of Hispanic and Black women on the project staff was a weakness." This line is crossed out on the draft with a handwritten note that states, "I don't feel that this was a weakness, because we more than compensated in the development of research." [161] It is unclear who wrote the note, although the most likely candidate is Mary Beth Rogers, the Project Director, and it is also unclear at this point how large or significant a conversation this was within the organization.

Most significantly, however, it is clear that individuals such as Ruthe Winegarten, Melissa Hield, Martha Smiley, and researcher Willie Lee Gay played an instrumental role in raising the consciousness of their peers about the history of women of color, championing their inclusion in the exhibit, and disseminating their histories to the Texan public—all of which had a profound impact on the trajectory of historical research in the state. Much more research on feminist activism in Texas during this period of time needs to be completed before we have a good picture of the ways that women's rights activists of different races, ethnicities, and backgrounds worked together to achieve political goals.

II. Feminist Strategies

The TFWR women developed a series of rhetorical and performative strategies to facilitate their goals for the exhibit. The TFWR women used humor as a rhetorical

[161] "Evaluation Narrative, Rough Draft by Melissa" Date Unclear. Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

strategy to express the conflicted messages they received about southern feminist womanhood. [162] Some feminists even considered the use of humor a particularly Texan coping strategy. Columnist Molly Ivins, a peer of many of the women in the TFWR, comments in a 1971 tongue-in-cheek article about Texas feminism, "It occurs to me, when I consider my more serious sisters in civilized parts, that there may be some advantage in the fact that a sense of humor about men is not a luxury down here: it is a necessity."[163] Evidence suggests that this use of comedy served both a real personal need, as well as a strategic one, enabling the TFWR to sugarcoat their feminist message by making it appear less serious or dangerous and allowing them to establish rapport with other women of similar social position. A wonderful example of this is Richards' and Carpenter's speech at the Austin opening to the "Texas Women" exhibit, which was widely picked up by the media. Richards, in particular, was famous for using humor to establish political connections as well as to vent her personal frustrations about important issues:[164]

> LC: We knew our place.
> AR: And thank God we lost it.
> LC: Sometimes we were just a joke.
> AR: Who says we burned our bras? We didn't dare. They were the only support we had.
> LC: All we could do is keep searching…Searching like Sherlock Holmes for our identity.
> AR: While not losing our femininity.

[162] Ashli Quesinberry Stokes. "Constituting Southern Feminists: Women's Liberation Newsletters in the South." *Southern Communication Journal* 70.2 (2005): 93. Print.
[163] Molly Ivins. "Lib in Longhorn Country." *The New York Times*, October 18, 1971: 37. Print.
[164] "Austin Opening 2/7/82 – Script." Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 27, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

> LC: It was like fumbling around in a pocketbook: Will someone please help me find my identity?
> AR: Meanwhile, please don't misplace your femininity.
> LC: Sure enough, we could do both! The world just didn't know it. Nothing shows it so much as this exhibit.

Significantly, this speech articulates the TFWR's belief that the historical narrative of the "Texas Women" exhibit could provide a road map for women struggling to combine both an active public life with a traditionally feminine identity.

The "Texas Woman" exhibit must also be considered a form of political spectacle that were intended to create a transformative, embodied feminist experience for its viewers. There is a long history in American political culture of staging political spectacle as an effort to in insert marginalized groups into the discourse of U.S. civic life, thereby laying claim to political power. Susan A. Glenn describes how, in the nineteenth century, this was mainly, "perceived as a male affair." Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century, however, woman's suffrage groups began to incorporate spectacle such as "elaborate street parades and pageants…open air speeches…outdoor rallies…street dances...hot air balloons… pro-suffrage comedies, satires, and dramas," among other things, into their political strategies. [165] Work on the relationship between spectacle and feminist activism coincides with a recent trend in the scholarship about the woman suffrage movement in the U.S. and Britain that stresses the significance of bodily representation and the experiences of embodiment in the construction of political

[165] Susan A. Glenn. "'The Eyes of the Enemy': Female Activism and the Paradox of Theater." *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000. 128-129. Print.

identities. For example, in her article, "Protesting Like a Girl: Embodiment, Dissent, and Feminist Agency," Wendy Parkins examines spectacular actions of the British militant suffrage movement such as hunger strikes and forcible feeding and finds a "feminist agency derived from corporeal performance." [166] She suggests that this feminist agency worked in three different ways: by "subvert[ing] dominant constructions of citizenship as exclusively masculine and primarily deliberative," "[keeping] the women's cause at the forefront of public attention," and "provid[ing] them with a powerful sense of their own bodily capacities, forming the basis of the women's self-proclaimed status as suffragettes." [167] Perhaps the most well-known of the U.S. woman suffrage activists to turn to political spectacle, Alice Paul of the National Women's Party, staged elaborate parades, tableau vivant, auto tours, and hunger strikes in order to both reinsert women into the civic sphere, as well as create embodied, transformative experiences for potential woman suffrage activists. Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene address similar issues in their recent book about the political tactics of the National Women's Party, argue that Paul, "insisted that [women] carry out and publicize their events without male help," both because she wanted to visually emphasize women's capabilities to the public, but also because, "all efforts had to be based in a new sense of self" in order for women to experience an understanding of their own potential as political actors.[168]

[166] Wendy Parkins. "Protesting Like a Girl: Embodiment, Dissent and Feminist Agency." *Feminist Theory*, 1:1, (2000): 59. Print.
[167] Ibid. 63.
[168] Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene. *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008: 36-37. Print.

It is useful to read the "Texas Women" exhibit as a form of political spectacle, or even political theater, which was intended to create an embodied feminist experience for its audience. The very venues in which the TFWR staged the opening events for the exhibit—the Institute of Texan cultures, the LBJ Library and Museum, and the Hall of State in Dallas, were powerful symbols of civic power in which the organization literally reinserted Texan women back into state history. As the very first paragraph of this thesis described, the openings themselves were star-studded, multi-media, gleefully over-the-top events that were intended to inspire, entertain, and emphasize the significance of both the historical narrative and the powerful leadership of the TFWR women. Tangential events surrounding the exhibit openings served to reinforce these themes. For example, the TFWR women convinced the female mayor of Austin to issue a proclamation, naming February 7, 1982 "Texas Women – A Celebration of History" Day.[169] The TFWR was also careful to surround itself with powerful figures—such as Lady Bird Johnson, who was well-loved in Texas and whose presence provided implicit state sanction. By surrounding themselves with nationally known and loved Texan women, and, indeed, by presenting particularly Lonestar tropes such as "Texan-sized" champagne glasses, the Foundation communicated its message to its audience in a discourse that would be especially resonant.

The TFWR were not only physically laying claim to political power through their carefully thought out settings and representations, they were also actively seeking a

[169] "City of Austin Proclamation." Texas Women: A Celebration of History Papers, Box 30, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

transformative experience for their audience. Consider the words of Liz Carpenter, as she encourages the members of the exhibit audience to anticipate a moving personal experience from “Texas Women,” “As you walk through the exhibit…I promise it will touch your very soul with its evidence of sheer endurance, of poignancy, laughter, passion, loneliness, and heartache. It will stir within you a thousand memories…offer new insights into the stuff that you too are made of.”[170] This form of consciousness-raising was particularly appropriate for the members of the TFWR, who felt uncomfortable with other forms of feminist consciousness-raising groups that were purely self-directed, preferring instead to focus on experiences that improved the self while having a clear impact on the community. Echoing the words of other members of the TFWR who shared her sentiment, Ann Richards comments in her memoirs that, “All my life I had felt that one’s motives had to be altruistic, that it was not okay to do things for yourself.”[171]

While it is difficult to measure the impact of the exhibit on individuals, there is anecdotal evidence that members of the audience not only enthusiastically responded to the exhibit, but left with a new consciousness of women’s experiences and importance in Texas. For example, Ruthe Winegarten bragged excitedly about the fact that, “men and women [who viewed the exhibit] had what can only be described as a kind of religious

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[170] “Remarks, Liz Carpenter, Opening Texas Women’s Exhibit, San Antonio, Texas, May 9, 1981.” Box 27, Mss. 20. The Woman’s Collection, Texas Women’s University, Denton, TX.
[171] Ann Richards and Peter Knobler. *Straight for the Heart: My Life in Politics and Other Places*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989: 181.Print.

experience. A man said, 'I feel like a born-again woman.'"[172] Mary Beth Rogers describes how, "you would see mothers and daughters and grandmothers talking…there were stories going back and forth among many generations in a family that had never been told before because nothing had ever prompted the telling of those stories…."[173] A collection of written responses by anonymous Dallas grade school students who visited the exhibit suggested that young children also developed a newfound appreciation for women's history and Texas women's capabilities. Comments included things such as, "I…have discovered from this talk that women in past history are just as important as past men," "Until Mrs. Rogers [spoke to us] I never realized that women had played such a big part in the history of Texas and the United States," and, finally, "…history is not one of my best subject [sic]. I found something that I can take of [sic] interest in…I plan on checking out the book and doing some research."[174]

We can also read the personal experiences of the TFWR women themselves as embodied transformative political experiences. On an individual level, participating in this project forged deep, and in many instances life-long, bonds between many of the women who were involved, nurturing within them a sense of connection to each other and to the Texas women who had come before them, and giving them what they describe as a life-altering opportunity to experience what it felt like to literally change history.[175] The bonds that they developed, as well as the personal meaning they derived from

[172] "Creating a Texas Women's History Industry" Paper, Ruthe Winegarten Papers, Box 2.325/c9oa, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
[173] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."
[174] "Exhibit - Student Comments – Seventh Graders" Folder, Box 38, The Texas Woman a Celebration of History Exhibit Papers, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[175] "Interview with Sherry Smith, March 27, 2009."

working on the exhibit, provided crucial sustenance for the women in times of personal crisis. For example, Melissa Hield relied heavily on the circle of TFWR women for support when her mother faced a life-threatening illness. In a letter to the group dated August 5, 1980, she writes, "I miss the gang, especially the Tuesday a.m. sessions which always got me thinking. Frieda [Werden] and Ruthe [Winegarten's] gave me something from there to hang on to, a center I need a lot now that things here are so confusing and immediate."[176]

Seeing the exhibit succeed also instilled a deep self-confidence in the women who worked on it. As Mary Beth Rogers comments, "Well I think it had an impact on all of us. It certainly did on me. And for all of us I think there was sense of pride. Because, my god, we could pull off something that looked impossible two year earlier! And so we all had a tremendous sense of accomplishment. It was very moving when we saw the exhibit being put into place. You know, you would just wander through… I wasn't the only one to do this, going through the exhibit kind of seemingly aimlessly, following people through to see what they were thinking and saying about it. And just realizing oh my god, this is even more important that I thought it was going to be." [177]

As part of this effort toward political spectacle, the TFWR women found opportunities to literally insert themselves into the historical narrative that they had constructed. While there seems to be considerable disagreement between the TFWR women about whether or not the exhibit was intended to be a springboard to state and

[176]"Letter to Mary Beth Rogers from Melissa Hield, August 5, 1980." Texas Women: A Celebration of History Papers, Box 20, "Correspondence-August 1980-Pt.A." Folder, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[177]"Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."

national political leadership for its members, there is substantial evidence that the organization was carefully maximizing Ann Richard's opportunities to appear publicly in relationship to the exhibit. According to Judith Guthrie, this was because the TFWR originally hoped that Sara Weddington might run for higher political office in the state, but after she accepted a position in the Carter administration, "Ann took her place" as the group's hope for a potential political "star." [178]

In addition to making sure that Richards was recognized as the impetus behind the exhibit, the TFWR made her into a living artifact. A 1983 press release, distributed soon after Richards was elected State Treasurer, announced that, "There will be a photo session in State Treasure Ann Richards' office at 10 am Friday April 1, during which Richards will turn over the first 'artifact' from her administration—an antiquated ten by ten adding machine—to historian Ruthe Winegarten and advisor Dorothea Brown." [179] Furthermore, they also announced that, "State Treasurer Ann Richards' first year in office will be the subject of an historical study... Richards is the first woman elected to statewide office in 50 years, and only the third woman in Texas history ever to hold elective state office. The study will be a project of the TX Foundation for Women's Resources, an Austin based educational organization…because of Ann Richards special place in history, we believe the changes she makes and the policies established in her first

[178] "Interview with Judith Guthrie, 11/10/08."

[179] "Press Release, April 1, 1983." Ann W. Richards Papers, Box 95-263/T18, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

year of office will be invaluable to future historians and students of state government alike."[180]

This effort had a profound impact on the development of a statewide political network that, in particular, helped Ann Richards run for State Treasurer in 1982 and later on for Governor in 1990. [181] While Richards would not have decided to run for State Treasurer when she did without the sudden opening caused by the current Treasurer, Warren G. Harding's, legal troubles, it is also true that she was riding high on a wave of significant publicity that highlighted her pivotal relationship to the "Texas Women" exhibit. Indeed, she held the kickoff party for her campaign for State Treasurer on February 1st, just six days before the Austin opening of the "Texas Women" exhibit. According to Mary Beth Rogers, "I can honestly say that when we started out we just wanted the story told, we wanted the facts out there, we wanted to make women visible. Now, that said, there was a by-product of all of this, that we didn't set out to create. And what happened is that we created a network of women all across the state of Texas who we all knew each other and admired each other and had helped each other on this project and when Ann decided to run for State Treasurer in 1982 there was a ready-made network of women supporters there and they had gotten used to writing checks to the

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[180] The TFWR may have even been influenced in their use of historical memory for political purposes by their experiences at the 1977 National Women's Year Conference. According to Prudence Mackintosh, "Sometimes it was hard to take seriously a conference that was trying so self-consciously to be historical. Bella [Abzug] and the other presiding officers were banging a gavel once used by Susan B. Anthony, tape recorders were set up in Convention Center for delegates and participants to record for posterity their views on the days' events, and conference memorabilia would be tagged and shipped to the Smithsonian." Mackintosh, Prudence. "The Good Old Girls." *Texas Monthly* Jan. 1978: 88-92: 150. Print.

[181] When Ann was elected State Treasurer, she became the first women in Texas to be elected to statewide office in fifty years.

women's history project and it was so, oh ok, I can write a $200 check to the Ann Richards campaign…" [182] This statewide network and publicity was especially significant because it exponentially increased Texans' recognition of Richards' name. According to 1977 media interviews about the National Women's Conference in Houston, Richards was not well-known outside of her home base of Austin. While the Conference also boosted her brand with women in the state, it was not until the "Texas Women" exhibit that she became a truly household name.[183]

What does it mean to reevaluate popular feminist constructions of historical memory as both political spectacle and embodied feminist change? First of all, it ties this activism, which is often overlooked or diminished—to a broader spectrum and lineage of feminist activism. Also, while other historians who have written about historical memory have commented on characteristics of that activism, such as the group bonds that develop between the women and their attempt to claim a form of political power, the overall results are often considered ineffective. By considering the possibility of transformative embodiment as a benefit, we can develop a more nuanced appreciation for the impact that that activism can have.

A review of the experiences of the TFWR activists also provides us with a broader understanding of the meaning of second wave feminisms during the 1970s and '80s. For example, while historians are very aware of the challenges posed by interracial and interclass coalitions, few have considered how regional tensions and

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[182] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."

[183] Prudence Mackintosh. "The Good Old Girls: Texans Didn't Exactly Run the National Women's Conference, But They Made it Work." *Texas Monthly*, January 1978: 153. Print.

misunderstandings may have made feminist coalitions more difficult. In addition, it is provocative to consider what we might learn from comparing these Texas feminists—who were stereotyped as southerners regardless of the appropriateness of this descriptor—to other feminist activisms in what is broadly construed as the south. Despite the fact that the TFWR identified themselves much more closely with frontier womanhood than the image of the southern belle, it does seem possible that the cultural climate in which they lived may have bore more similarity to their sisters in the south than those in the northeast. Ashli Quesinberry Stokes' research on Southern Women's Liberation newsletters suggests that SWL activists developed unique strategies to respond to the gendered climate of the south, which sound quite familiar to some of the strategies that the TFWR used.[184] For example, Stokes argues that the activists she studied were, "mindful of the region's complex history and cultural traditions," and for this reason their rhetoric "attempted to integrate, rather than denigrate, some of the traditional aspects of women's experience with the more radical." [185] She shows how southern white SWL activists wrestled with their response to the beauty industry and particularly powerful cultural standards of southern feminine presentation. Finally, she points out the many ways that SWL activists used "playfulness and humor to show the arbitrary nature of beauty standards or their comments expressed the sadness and the alienation that they

[184] Ashli Quesinberry Stokes. "Constituting Southern Feminists: Women's Liberation Newsletters in the South." *Southern Communication Journal* 70.2 (2005): 91-108. Print.
[185] Ibid. 97-98.

experienced as a result of them" in contrast to Northern feminists, who expressed more overt anger in their criticism. [186]

Finally, it is important to consider whether the TFWR's approach to feminist activism—which took into careful consideration its cultural climate—may have been more effective than other more confrontational forms of feminist activism. It is unclear whether or not the Foundation originally understood how significant the "Texas Women" exhibit could be as a tool of feminist political activism. As the project unfolded, however, the staffers and board members alike realized that the exhibit could and did have incredible consequences. Despite the snickers of some feminists who scoffed at the TFWR's "white glove" approach to activism, there is evidence that this pragmatic approach was successful on several fronts, in ways that other feminist initiatives may not have been at the time. For example, based on correspondence between Mary Beth Rogers and Mark Krueger of the Continental Group in New York about a recently published report on the fundraising efforts of women's organizations, it appears that the Foundation was more successful at fundraising then most of its sister entities. [187] The Foundation related this success directly to the fact that the exhibit did not radically question standard gender roles, although it still ended up being subversive in ways that funders did not seem to predict. According to Judith Guthrie, "This was a non-threatening project to funders and while it wasn't on the top of anyone's list, when asked they would say, "What would this hurt? Isn't this cute?" And of course it ended up honing our skills in so

[186] Ibid. 98.

[187] "Letter from Mark Krueger to Mary Beth Rogers, November 28, 1979." Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 20, Folder: November, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX. I have yet to find a copy of the report they were discussing.

many ways and connected us to so many people."[188] Members of the TFWR argue convincingly that both the political skills they developed during the course of the exhibit, as well as the strong relationships they built with funders, paved the way for the success of their future programs— most notably the Women's Museum in Texas, which was conceptualized and funded within only four years, while other women's history museum projects languished around the country, and Leadership Texas, a women's leadership program that has served more than 3000 women—which have continued to serve their goals of integrating women into the civic life of the state and furthering interest in women's history.[189] As Judith Guthrie describes it, "this was the glue that was going to hold [the movement] together, getting new women into conspiracy…light[ing] some new women on fire…"[190]

Perhaps the most significant impact that the TFWR had on the state, however, was the foundation that they built with their work for future women's historians and the new respect for women's history that they inspired among Texans. The conclusion of this thesis explores the exhibit as a part of a national grassroots women's history movement that swept the country in the 1970s and 1980s, and pushes us to reimagine our image of the history of women's history itself.

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[188] "Interview with Judith Guthrie, November 10, 2008."

[189] http://www.womensresources.org/LT.asp, August 28, 2009.

[190] Ibid.

Conclusion:
The TFWR, Grassroots Women's History Movements and the "Birth" of a "Texas Women's History Industry"

In several of her numerous media interviews in the 1980s, Mary Beth Rogers remarked with obvious satisfaction that, "no one will ever again be able to tell us that Texas women have no history." [191] This is, ultimately, the greatest legacy of the "Texas Women" exhibit. The Foundation was explicit about the fact that their project was an attempt to rectify Texas women's erasure from the historical record. As they describe in their exhibit catalog, "The Texas Women's History Project was set up by the Texas Foundation for Women's Resources in 1978 to determine the nature of women's participation in the public life of Texas. The need for the project arose because women have been virtually ignored in the state's history, textbooks, museums, major collections, and folklore….Their activities, now documented…can no longer be ignored. Texas Women—A Celebration of History makes the first statewide effort to tell the story of half of Texas' people—the women."[192] By shining an intense media spotlight on women's history, and in the sheer wealth of women's history resources that they uncovered, the TFWR forced museums, schools, and citizens to reconsider the nature of history and the meaning of Texas identity; and spurred the production of new scholarly works on the

[191] Gaylon Finklea Young. "Exhibit to Tell 'Tall Tales' of Texas Women." *Express-News*, date and page number unclear, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

[192] Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Exhibit Catalogue, Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1981, 5. Curiously—or perhaps diplomatically—the exhibit also argues that it is women's naturally humble nature—and men's predilection to take control of successful projects—which has prevented their leadership from being recognized. The exhibit suggests that, "As female-initiated institutions grew and prospered, men often became more deeply involved in them. Women usually gave up their titles and public recognition, yet still carried out vital functions on a volunteer basis." Ibid., 14.

topic. One can only imagine the satisfaction of Richards and the rest of the organization when Jack Maguire, Director of the ITC, enthusiastically told the media that the "Texan Women" exhibit was, "perhaps the most important exhibition we've ever worked on."[193]

For many of the TFWR women—particularly the research team—the "Texas Women" history project was not simply a onetime statewide history exhibit, but rather a catalyst; the beginning of an all-out offensive which aimed to transform the very essence of Texas historical production for the future. Spearheaded in large part by Ruthe Winegarten, the group formulated a very business-oriented plan for a "Texas Women's History Industry" that aimed to both nurture the production of women's history in the state, as well as to provide opportunities for historians and archivists to develop their craft.[194] This is perhaps best spelled out by Winegarten and Werden's speech at the Berkshire Women's History Conferences in June of 1981. In addition to stressing many of the political goals described in the previous chapter, the two women also emphasized the following "long-range" goals for their history projects: "[To] sensitiz[e] libraries and

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[193] Barbara Lau. "Texas Women's History: Out of the Attic and into the Limelight," *Austin Magazine*, 23:5, May 1981: 78. Print.

[194] See:"Creating a Texas Women's History Industry, Paper Presented at the Berkshire Conference, June 1981," Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 37a, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX; and "Getting Women into the Texas History Mainstream, April 24, 1985;" Suggestions for Getting More Women's History into the Texas Public School Curricula, July 1, 1985;" and "Letter to Ellen Temple and Mary Beth Rogers from Ruthe Winegarten, April 24, 1985," all from the Ruthe Winegarten Papers, Box 2.325/E455a, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX. It remains unclear how much organizational support Winegarten had for all of these efforts, although there is clear evidence that the broader TFWR played a role in many of these initiatives.

museums… to improve career possibilities for scholars, librarians, and museum workers, and to develop curriculum materials for the public schools….” [195]

The TFWR undertook a variety of initiatives in order to achieve this goal. For example, they carefully analyzed the representation of women in all of the official Texas history textbooks used in the state school system and then diligently—and patiently over the course of several years— lobbied the Texas Division of the Texas Education Agency to include more materials about Texas women.[196] When they felt that the textbook process was not moving quickly enough, they produced and financed their own children's book about Texas women's history. [197] The sheer wealth of new resources on Texas women's history that the TFWR uncovered has also played a crucial role in the development of scholarly history books for adults. To this day, most of the significant published research about Texas women's history was either produced by the TFWR themselves or by scholars who were influenced by/affiliated with the project. Indeed, Ruthe Winegarten's work on the "Texas Women" project became the springboard to a new career as a respected, and prolific, women's historian, which lasted until her death in

[195] "Creating a Texas Women's History Industry." Unpublished conference presentation, co-authored by Ruthe Winegarten and Frieda Werden, June 1981. Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collections, Box 37a, The Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[196] See, for example, "Survey of Some of the History Books Used in Texas High Schools, Memo from Laraine Benedikt," Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 37a, "Advisory Committee Meeting June 14, 1980 Folder," The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX; plus all materials in Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Box 37a, "Textbook Folder," The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[197] Mary Beth Rogers et al. *We Can Fly: Stories of Katherine Stinson and Other Gutsy Texas Women*. Lufkin, TX: Ellen C. Temple Press, 1983. Print. Ellen C. Temple was a board member of the TFWR.

2004.[198] The exhibit also inspired two smaller women's history exhibits, "Through Women's Eyes: A Women's History of Texas" at the Barker Texas History Center and "Early Implements Used in Women's Work: 19th Century Patent Models" at the Texas Memorial Museum, which ran concurrently.[199]

The TFWR was instrumental in convincing the Texas legislature to create an official state women's history collection at Texas Women's University, now the Woman's Collection, which houses the bulk of the TFWR's own archives. After collecting together so many wonderful historical artifacts and materials, the group faced the need to find a repository that would maintain them for future scholarship. While the Foundation seriously considered approaching a variety of educational institutions, including Baylor University, Texas Tech, and the Barker Collection at the University of Austin as possible homes, they soon focused their efforts on creating an archive at the University of Texas at Dallas.[200] UT Dallas was interested enough in the project to produce a prospectus about a potential archive in 1978—taking pains to emphasize that, "this program is not an effort to form an archive on women's liberation affairs. The militant, feminist movement is important…However, the program outlined is an attempt

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[198] For example: Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten. *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003. Print.; Judith N. McArthur. *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women's Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998. Print.; A. Elizabeth Taylor. *Citizens at Last: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas: Essay*. Ruthe Winegarten and Judith N. McArthur, consulting eds. Austin: Ellen C. Temple, 1987. Print.; Winegarten, Ruthe. *Black Texas Women: 125 Years of Trial and Triumph*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. Print.; and Ruthe Winegarten. *Black Texas Women: A Sourcebook, Documents, Biographies, Timeline*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996.Print.
[199] Peggy Ficak. "LBJ Library Show Honors Texas Women." *The Daily Texan*, February 5, 1982: 10. Print.
[200] Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 37a, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

to collect a balanced, general view on the emerging view of women today." It soon became clear to Ruthe Winegarten, however, that a, "woman's archive at UTD was not a high priority."[201] Serendipitously, however, the President of Texas Women's University, Mary Evelyn Blagg-Huey, contacted the TFWR soon after because of her interest in creating a women's history archive at TWU. With the donation of the TFWR materials to the university, the team was able to convince the legislature to officially form the archive in the early 1980s [202]

Finally, the TFWR was also successful in lobbying the Handbook of Texas, an, "encyclopedia of Texas history, geography, and culture sponsored by the Texas State Historical Association," to include more materials about women.[203] The following conversation between Sherry A. Smith and TSHA Director, L. Tuffly Ellis, illustrates the sheer chutzpah of the organization's lobbying efforts. Smith writes, "I took seriously your general request for suggestions for new topics and entries for the revised edition of the Handbook…Enclosed is a list of organizations/groups who should be included in the new edition." A bemused Ellis responds, "I am very pleased you took seriously my request for suggestions. We definitely want to include all of the really significant women…At this point, we are working on the preliminary list of entries." Reading between the lines, one can imagine Ellis' surprise that Smith had not been put off by his original, polite

[201] "The University of Texas at Dallas Library Women's Archive and Research Collections Prospectus, March, 1978" and "Memo from Ruthe Winegarten to Mary Beth Rogers, December 5, 1979," Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Box 37a, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[202] "Letter from Mary Evelyn Blagg-Huey to Mary Beth Rogers, July 23, 1979," and "Letter from Mary Beth Rogers to Mary Evelyn Blagg-Huey, August 2, 1979."
[203] http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/, August 29, 2009.

disregard.[204] The TFWR went on to fund a position at the Handbook, and sees their relationship with the TSHA as one of their most successful women's history initiatives.[205]

The TFWR women not only saw themselves as guardians of Texas history, however, they also loudly professed their desire to become a "national prototype" for women's history projects around the country. [206] As previous chapters have demonstrated, the "Texas Women" exhibit must be interpreted as an expression of feminist political activism and as a response to broader cultural questions about the meaning of femininity and Texan identity, but it also needs to be understood as a broad offshoot of the burgeoning women's history movement of the 1960s and 1970s. While extraordinary for the state, The Texas Women's History Project was one of many grassroots women's history initiatives that blossomed around the country during this period of time. The TFWR played an active role in a network of popular and academic women's history projects that dotted the country, doing everything from visiting with and advising the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls on exhibit presentation; presenting at national academic, as well as feminist, conferences; corresponding with Andrea Hinding (of *Women's History Sources*, fame) on the TFWR's *Bibliography*; and encouraging both local non-profit women's history groups and professors to persevere in

[204] "Letter from Sherry A. Smith to L. Tuffly Ellis, August 26, 1982" and "Letter from Tuffly Ellis to Sherry A. Smith, September 1, 1982" Texas Women's Political Caucus Collection, Box 35b, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.
[205] "Interview with Mary Beth Rogers, November 19, 2008."
[206] Gaylon Finklea Young. "Exhibit to Tell 'Tall Tales' of Texas Women." *Express-News*, date and page number unclear, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

their projects. [207] Although it failed to take off as they had anticipated, the TFWR even created a prospectus for what they termed a "museum consultation project," in which they envisioned a series of workshops on ways to create women's history exhibits that they hoped to offer around the country.[208]

The story of the TFWR pushes us to reconsider our grand narrative of the birth of women's history. Our texts frequently present the birth of women's history as the province of activists-turned-academics and gloss over the production of women's history by political groups as positive, yet nevertheless marginal side effects of broader feminist initiatives. For example, Judith P. Zinsser argues that, "While women scholars have worked from within the academy, there have also been effective feminist initiatives outside of colleges and universities, in local and state government agencies, in factories and offices, at social and professional gatherings. The leaders of these groups publicize women's history as part of their overall strategy. They ignore theoretical questions of integration, transformation, and gender analysis. They simply want people thinking and talking about women's history, valuing women's accomplishments and contributions."[209]

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[207] "Field Visit to National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, NY on Friday, Sept. 4, 1981 – Memo from Ruthe Winegarten to Mary Beth Rogers," Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Box 28, National Women's Hall of Fame Folder, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX; "Letter from Ruthe Winegarten to Andrea Hinding, December 17, 1979," Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Collection, Box 20, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX; "Letter from Professor Maxine Taylor, Northwestern State University of Louisiana to Mary Beth Rogers, December 20, 1979," Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Collection, Box 20, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX; "Letter from Sherry A. Smith to Cecile Malone, Georgia History Project, August 17, 1982," Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Collection, Box 32, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX;

[208] "Texas Women-A Celebration of History, Now What?" Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, Collection, Box 35a, Museum Consultation Project Folder, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

[209] Judith P. Zinsser. *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993: 127.

While hinting at the sheer number of non-academic groups that have created women's history in the twentieth century, this comment is representative of the ways that the scholarly literature has downplayed their impact on the development of the discipline in the 1970s and 1980s and on the political trajectory of feminist movements. This lack of scholarly analysis of popular women's history groups disregards the large body of literature on public history and the production of historical memory that stresses the many significant ways that history has been used to construct group identities and maintain or secure power.[210] It is clear that, at least for some women, the conscious production of women's history has served a powerful role in their growth and self-conceptualization as political actors and has helped them achieve the political goals that they have set.

Over the course of my research, I have come across multiple examples of additional initiatives outside the mainstream of academia that were producing women's history for popular, as well as academic audiences. In just one example, Northwest Women's Report noted in 1982 that, "In the Northwest Women's Report coverage area, at least six projects have already contributed substantially to the gathering of women's history. Each project stems from a similar goal on the part of its participants. Kathryn Anderson…writes about the Washington Women's Heritage Project, "We hope that museum exhibits, text books, and the like will include women along with men at every

[210] See, for example, David Glassberg. *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. Print.; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Print.; Michael G. Kammen. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture.* New York: Knopf, 1991. Print.; and Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Print.

level of interpreting and reconstructing the state's past…."[211] From a preliminary analysis of what little we know about women's history groups during the second wave as, it appears that they exhibited some similar characteristics in terms of the crucial role that state humanities commissions played in providing early funding for their projects and in the kinds of multi-cultural, highly inclusive projects that were produced. [212] Refuting her own earlier disregard for the political impact of popular women's history groups, Zinsser's work on the National Women's History Project—essentially the only published work I have located that explores the motivations and activities of popular women's history groups in any detail—suggests some striking similarities between their feminist strategies and the strategies of the TFWR. She describes how:

> "Practical choices and tactics differentiated [the NWHP] from other local feminist initiatives and explained their…subsequent impact. They had a single mission: to expand and sustain awareness of multicultural women's history…They saw this new knowledge as a way to make all women 'more self-assured, more responsible…and more optimistic about the power we have over our lives.'…Their goal from the beginning was to spark this awareness and to inspire

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[211] "Collecting the Sources: Women's History Projects Flourish in the Northwest, " *Northwest Women's Report*, 1:2, March/April 1982, page 1, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G140, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

[212] See Judith P. Zinsser. *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993. Print.; and "Collecting the Sources: Women's History Projects Flourish in the Northwest, " *Northwest Women's Report*, 1:2, March/April 1982, page 1, Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G140, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

> this sense of power, to identify clear, simple tasks, symbolic acts and words that turned a concept into something practical and tangible."[213]

What are we to make of these similarities? Is it that many feminists, responding to a growing backlash against feminism, turned to women's history as an expression of their feminist values in lieu of other, more radical initiatives? Or is it that those projects which we remember, and that appear to have had broad impact, were the ones that presented themselves as apolitical? Much more comparative research on popular women's history groups is needed in order to develop a fuller picture of their methods and goals.

Perhaps what has been most surprising to me in researching the "Texas Women" exhibit, has been the relative fluidity of the discipline of women's history in the 1970s and 1980s, and the freedom that the TFWR researcher felt they had to write history because they were *not* academics. As Mary Beth Rogers commented, "If I had been a professional historian, I never would have attempted it…People kept telling me a story of this scope couldn't be done." [214]If there was a hunger on the part of the TFWR women to understand the nature of female identity, there also seems to have been a hunger for both information about and permission to create women's history on the part of archivists, museum professionals, scholars, and amateur historians who responded so eagerly to the project.[215] Influential professional historians also recognized the work of the TFWR as path breaking, including Gerda Lerner, whose "community building" thesis and

[213] Judith P. Zinsser. *History & Feminism: A Glass Half Full*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993: 129. Print.
[214] Barbara Lau. "Texas Women's History: Out of the Attics and Into the Limelight." *Austin Magazine*, 23:5, May 1981: 78. Print.
[215] Texas Foundation for Women's Resources Collection, Box 20, The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, TX>

pioneering work on women's history helped inspire the TFWR project. In a letter to the TFWR she called the project, "an inspiring example of what can and should be done in every state…"[216]

Ultimately, the TFWR must be considered one in a long chain of popular history groups who have contributed to the development of the discipline of history without scholarly approval or recognition. Julie Des Jardin's groundbreaking book, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880 – 1945,* argues that U.S. women have played a significant and unrecognized role in the development of the discipline of history in the late 19th and early 20th century through their work in preservationist groups, historical societies, and as writers and educators [217] She pointedly suggests that, "Perhaps by assuming that male scholars arbitrated all the ways Americans understood the past we give an inordinate amount of attention to the production of academic scholarship and not enough to its actual consumption among the wider populace outside the academy, where women were prolific shapers of history."[218] As the story of the "Texas Women" A Celebration of History" exhibit illustrates, more attention and credit must also be given to the these local, non-academic organizations and activists that produced women's history both for strategic political purposes and in order to carve out a respectable space for the brand new discipline within popular culture and in the educational system of the 1970s and 80s.

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[216] "Letter from Gerda Lerner to TFWR," Melissa Hield Papers, Box 2.325/G159, Reviews Folder, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
[217] Julie Des Jardins. *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003: 5. Print.
[218] Ibid.5.

This new perspective on the production of women's history also fits squarely into a recent, broader conversation within the discipline that critiques a narrow, homogenous definition of second-wave feminism that emphasizes white, middle class activism—at the expense of women of color—that has been canonized in academia. According to Stephanie Gilmore in her new anthology, *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, "the scholarly story of feminism was the production of feminist activists who entered the academy; according to feminist activist Eileen Boris, it 'came out of the search for identity and struggles of some women in the late 1960s'…as a result, the movement and the actors are suspended in historical—or rather *ahistorical*—amber, unable to move or be moved."[219] Not only does the work of the TFWR add to the growing body of work that shows the complicated, messy ways that women's rights activists of many ethnicities worked together and impacted each other, I would also argue that we must think of the history of popular women's history as a story that has been set in "ahistorical amber." It is completely understandable that the academic women's historians who have written our grand narrative of the "birth" of women's history would have prioritized scholarship produced by their professional peers. At the same time, we cannot fully appreciate, nor critique, the work that we do as women's historians without examining and celebrating the work of all of the historians who created the foundation of the discipline in which we work.

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[219] Stephanie Gilmore, ed. *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008: 1-2. Print.

In her meditation on the future of feminist history, Joan W. Scott considers what it means to write and study women's history after the early, heady years of the women's history movement, when every discovery of a historical artifact about women felt precious; each battle for inclusion momentous. She suggests that we, as women's historians, must rediscover our passion by rethinking what it is about women's history that arouses our curiosity. She writes, "We are confused about the source of our passion, mistaking "women" for the excitement of the new and unknown. What if our sense that we already know what feminist history is blocks that divine madness, that inspired arousal, which is precisely an encounter with the unknown?"[220] One of the most precious things for me about this project has been the opportunity to understand on an emotional level both the excitement that the TFWR women felt for the history they were creating, as well as the tangible impact that this history had on their lives and their activism. I hope that by pushing us to reconsider the "unknown" about the history of women's history itself, to fuel the passion of future women's historians.

[220] Joan W. Scott."Feminism's History." *Journal of Women's History* 16: 2 (2004): 8. Print.

Appendix A: Founding TFWR Board Members and Fundraisers

Cathy Bonner

Judith Guthrie

Jane Hickie

Katherine B. “Chula” Reynolds

Ann Richards

Mary Beth Rogers

Martha Smiley

Ellen Temple

Sarah Weddington

Appendix B: "Texas Women: A Celebration of History" Researchers and Consultants

Research Staff

Project Director: Mary Beth Rogers

Curator/Research Director: Ruthe Winegarten

Art/Photography Curator: Sherry A. Smith

Associate Curator: Frieda Werden

Historian: Melissa Hield

Researcher and Writer: Janelle Scott

Programs Coordinator: Mary Sanger

Creative Consultant: Anne Blocker

Researchers

Louise Bocock

Dr. Rose Brewer

Dr. Olivia Evey Chapa

Martha Cotera

Nancy Fleming

Maria Flores

Martha Hartzog

Merily Keller

Mary Kay Kneif

Amy Kwalwasser

Barbara Lau

Patricia Martin

Dr. Leatha Miloy

Sheila Smith

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Austin, TX

The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin

Raye Virginia Allen Collection, 1964-1978
Ann W. Richards Papers, 1933-2000
Melissa Hield Papers, 1889-1991
Ruthe Winegarten Papers, 1912-2004

Denton, TX

The Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University

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Martha Smiley Papers
Texas Women's Political Caucus Papers

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